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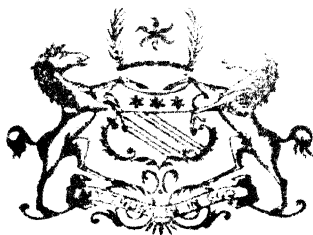


WOONG.

WOOING:

*STORIES OF THE COURSE THAT NEVER
DID RUN SMOOTH.*

BY
R. E. FRANCILLON,
AND OTHER WRITERS.



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WOOLIN

*STORIES OF THE COURSE THAT NEVER DID
RUN SMOOTH.*

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THE ROMANCE OF RYDE PIER.

BY R. E. FRANCILLON.

I.

“THE pier is the most important adjunct to the town, as it is to it that Ryde owes all its prosperity. Before its erection in 1814 the place was an insignificant village; now it is a municipal borough, with a resident population of fourteen or fifteen thousand souls, to say nothing of the visitors who annually flock to its shores. The pier was at first only one thousand seven hundred and forty feet long, but in 1824 and 1833 it was increased to its present length of about half a mile.”

So says the guide-book; and to the ordinary reader the depth of romance contained in these dry statistics and skeleton details may not readily appear. I do not allude to the singular fact that Ryde, according to the guide-book, is inhabited by thousands of disembodied souls; though a town of ghosts is certainly singular enough to make an annual flock of curious visitors inevitable in these days of spiritual inquiry. I do not

allude to this for the simple reason that, judging from my own experience, Ryde contains exactly as many bodies as souls. And, as the guide-book determines to say nothing of the visitors, I shall do the same, though no doubt every visitor has, or has had, or will have, a romance of his or her own. The point to which I draw special attention is this: that in the year 1823, Ryde Pier was only five hundred and eighty yards long; in 1833 the length had grown to about eight hundred and eighty yards. Now the difference between five hundred and eighty and eight hundred and eighty is precisely three hundred; and precisely upon those additional three hundred yards of planking is built the history of two human lives. If the authorities of the municipal borough had stopped at one thousand seven hundred and forty feet, Ryde Pier would have been three hundred yards shorter, and I—but it is idle to speculate upon what might have been.

I might have been an Englishman, a Welshman, an Irishman, a Manxman, or a Channel Islander. Happily, I am none of these. And, being no native of Ryde, my soul and body were born together, and they had the wisdom to be born at Drumferlie, a parish which (in proportion to the number of its population, and to the extent of their opportunities) has produced a greater number of distinguished men than any in the rest of the world. It was mainly, if not altogether, inhabited by my own relations, both on the father's and the mother's side; nor can I call to mind one who has not worthily reached exceptional and not seldom extraordinary dis-

tion. The fame of my uncle Archie, as a poet only second, if second, to Robert Burns, reached from one end of the parish to the other, and even into the next. There was not a man or woman in the family who had not more faith in the natural medical skill of my paternal grandmother than in that of all the faculty in Edinburgh, and justly so, for scarcely one of us ever ailed, or died under the full term of three score and ten. The sermons of my kinsman, who was for forty years minister of Drumferlie, were just the longest and the deepest of any that I ever heard; and as to my father, if he hadn't had the good luck to be a Drumferlie man, he must have had the bad one to be a cabinet minister, for he was the wisest man I ever knew, and just flowing over with philosophy. But I needn't go through my pedigree. As for myself, I'll say nothing. But it's my hope to do well enough to be worthy of having my bones laid in the dear old town when my turn comes to die. One comfort is, do what I will, I can't unmake myself a Drumferlie man—a Plackless of Drumferlie. And that alone is more than happens to men who are born elsewhere with other names.

I was an only son, and learned Latin, English, and mathematics at the common school, and I don't find that I know them the worse for not having been at Eton. One might think, considering that I had the blood of a poet in me, and that Drumferlie is unquestionably the most beautiful as well as the least frequented parish in the county, that I should have inherited a rag or two of

uncle Archie's mantle. But the numbers in which I lisped were of a more practical kind, and better adapted for charming open the world's oyster-shell. I have already shown that I have a statistical turn, and I believe could put two and two together before Nature had done it for me on my fourth birthday.

"But you mustn't be imagining, James," said my father, when I was setting out for college, "that increase always comes by addition; no, nor even by multiplication, when addition means marrying, and multiplication a family. It's true I took your mother without a penny, and not done ill thereby; but then that's because your mother's your mother, with nobody else to match her in all Drumferlie. Stick tight to the books, lad, till you see your way clear, and don't let me live to see my James wrestling the world with some feckless lass pulling down his hands, and a basketful of bairns at the bare back of him. To put *multum in parvo*, James, God bless you, and whatever you are, don't be a fool."

"Indeed I won't," said I, a little surprised at the nature of my father's parting advice, for I had never looked twice at a girl, and indeed regarded the whole sex as made to inspire rather an awkward sort of awe than any sort of attraction. But, oddly enough, my mother was in the same song.

"Ye'll light on better-favoured lasses where ye're going than any that are growing up just now in Drumferlie," said she. "And they'll have eyes in their heads for a well-looking lad, and maybe ye'll find

a blink or two in your own for them. But haste's no speed ; take your own time. 'Tis true I took your father without a penny, and not done that ill ; but then your father's your father, with nobody else to match him in all Drumferlie." She suddenly stopped and turned away. "Don't think I'm crying because ye're going where it's good for ye to be," said she sharply. "I've had a bad cold for days, but 'twill be well when ye're home."

I don't suppose that it was owing to the advice of my parents that I acted, when out in the world, in the strictest accordance with their most unreasonable desires. Not even in the great city of Aberdeen did I meet with one who appeared either by nature or by dowry fit to become Mistress James Plackless of Drumferlie. My father was right. There was nobody like my mother, even in Aberdeen. I studied with fair industry and success, and grew up into a big callant with five feet eleven inches of length, a due proportion of breadth and girth, a decently furnished head, and plenty of muscle and bone. I hadn't fully made up my mind what I was going to be ; sometimes I was fired with an ambition to fill a professor's chair, another time I was fascinated by medicine, another time by law, and then again London and letters drew me with the magnet that has proved to so many of my fellow-countrymen an irresistible charm. Indeed, my ancestors had distinguished themselves in so many different and opposite directions, that some new drop of hereditary blood seemed to speak out in me every

new day. Business alone had no attraction for me, doubtless owing to the fact that commerce is the one department of life in which no Plackless—so far as I was then aware—had ever reached distinction. On the whole, however, the desire to be a soldier took more and more hold of me, until it bade fair to extinguish every other. Only the purchase money of a commission was out of the question, and the days were past when the ranks of foreign services opened a fitting career for a Scottish scholar and gentleman.

And so things were floating and drifting, as they will for a while in most lives, when my father, while we were one morning strolling together round the toun-croft, as our bit of a farm was called, presently sat down upon a top bar of a gate, pulled out his pipe, filled and lighted it, and having taken a very deliberate puff or two began :

“ James, ye’ve never heard of my first cousin, Andrew Reid ? ”

“ Never. Have we any cousins whom I don’t know ? ”

“ I’ve told ye—Andrew Reid. His mother was Euphemia Plackless, that was my aunt, and would be your own great-aunt if she was alive ; but she wasn’t spoken of in the family, because she went off with William Reid ; it was an ugly story, and the less we say of that chapter of it the better. However, Andrew Reid’s their son, and, in spite of his name, he seems to have turned out as good a Plackless as ye’ll find even here in Drumferlie—except that he’s made enough

money out in the colonies to buy up the whole town. Ye're listening, James ?”

I was certainly listening—rich relations were not heard of every day.

“And he must be his mother's own son ; for I, as the head of the family, had a letter from him about the time you first went to Aberdeen, saying it was her last dying wish that her son should become friends with her own people. Only the lad hadn't liked to write sooner, because he wouldn't come back like a beggar to the folk that had turned her out of doors, or while one of them that had treated her that gait was alive. It was a good, stout-hearted, honest, decent letter, James, like a man would write to a man ; and I felt my fist stretching out to him all the way to Canada—for that's where the Reids had gone. But as a man of the world I made enquiries ; and I'm bound to say the lad had made his fortune, and his letter was all as true as it seemed. Since then I wrote, and then he wrote again ; and though we've never set eyes on each other yet, we're good cousins and friends. And well we may be, for we're his only kith and kin, and we've some wrong to see undone, I fear—it can't be much, seeing that we're Placklesses of Drumferlie—but still some.”

“I'm glad to have heard that story,” said I. “I should like to see my cousin, Andrew Reid, who, for his dying mother's sake, gave up his pride.”

“Yes,” said my father, “I should like ye to be acquainted with him too. And as he's come from Canada, I think 'twould be the right thing to meet him,

and give him a welcome home, and bring him down with ye to Drumferlie, if ye find him not too fine for our homely ways. And, James, it's but fair to tell ye he's got one daughter—just one, who'll come in for all his money, and who's the apple of his eye. And, James, it's Andrew Reid's self that has written to me: 'What if your James and my Effie take it into their heads to heal the old feud in the surest way of all?' My father blew a long slow cloud, and did not even look at me.

If he had, he would have seen me turn as red as fire—though for no deeper cause than that a woman's name should be coupled with mine.

Whether my father went the right way to work in order to bring about a marriage, upon which, as I could easily see, he had set his heart, may be questioned. When I have told this story, I have heard it urged that the way to set young people against one another is to arrange a marriage between them in royal fashion, and that the way to bring them together is just to let them take their chance, with an understanding that the banns shall be forbidden. But my father's policy was invariably that which is popularly ascribed to the German Chancellor. He always went to his point as straight as he could go, and got there rather more often than otherwise. Of course I did not for a moment suppose that his suggestion was made for sentimental reasons; and yet my instinct told me that without those sentimental reasons it would never have been made. He wanted to bring money into the house of

THE ROMANCE OF RYDE PIER.

Plackless, and also felt that the gold, in this case, would bring with it the blessing promised to peace-makers, so that, for once, profit and brotherly love went hand in hand. And wherefore no ?

Now I understood why, just at the time of my departure from Aberdeen, both my father and mother had been so anxious to save me from the nets of strange women. Was I glad to hear of this plan, accepted as it was by both the high contracting parties, or no ? No ; I was not glad. But, on the other hand, I was not sorry. I had no affairs of the heart, I had never had one of the slightest kind. I had no perverse prejudice against the idea of marrying. I knew the need of money at Drumferlie, and I saw a coveted, hitherto hopeless, pair of epaulettes glittering before me in the air. Moreover, I had been touched by the story of Euphemia Reid and her son ; and I had no fear of not making a tolerably good husband, as husbands go, with my father's example before me. As for the girl herself—but that time alone could show. I did not even ask myself if she were likely to prove pretty or plain. And even now I am not sure that, if I were looking for a wife, I should be particularly fastidious in the matter of beauty. I had a very high opinion of my own sense, as acquired at Drumferlie and cultivated at Aberdeen ; and a sensible marriage, concluded on both advantageous and honourable grounds, was hardly more to my father's liking—at least in theory—than my own.

“Where are they ?” asked I.

"Ye're a good lad, James," said my father, looking me over approvingly. "I was sure ye'd never let yourself be caught by any of those daughters of Heth in Aberdeen. Effie Reid, ye see, is a Drumferlie girl on her grandmother's side—and 'Marry over the midden' is an old word and a true. They're at a place in the south, called Ryde. It's a long way out into the world; but it's not as if ye hadn't been out into the world before. Ye'll go?"

My mother said not a word about either the fact of my journey or its object; but I could see, nevertheless, that my father had not that object at heart more than she. We were simple people, after our fashion, and, in spite of Uncle Archie's poetry, were ignorant that it is the bounden duty of every man and of every woman to live and die unmarried unless he or she is capable of a grand, poetical, romantic, artistic passion. And as not one in ten millions is capable of such a thing, it is clear that upon the practical adoption of our sordid and prosaic creed the continuance of the human race depends. Indeed, I sometimes almost suspect that passion and sentiment (out of books) are impostures and shams. And I should more than only almost suspect it if—— But "if" is the longest word in any language, and I cannot leap over it at a single bound.

II.

THE sun shone gloriously as I stepped upon the seaward head of Ryde Pier. That is, indeed, a long

leap at a single bound—all the way from Drumferlie to Ryde. It was, indeed, by far the longest journey I had ever made in my life, and I had run through the whole length of England at a swoop, on the very first occasion of my crossing the Tweed. It was a more novel experience to me than an American's first visit to Paris; for, to tell the truth, my views of South Britain were a good deal coloured by very old-fashioned prejudices and ancient tradition. Nevertheless, many of my beliefs had been amply confirmed. Certainly not at Drumferlie, and not even in the midst of the extravagance and luxury of Aberdeen, had my not over well-stocked purse received so many calls as it had been obliged to answer in the comparatively few hours between Berwick-upon-Tweed and Stokes Bay. And now, so soon as I landed, what with porters and pier dues, "bang went sixpence again!"

But, as I have said, the sun shone as, I am bound in fairness to allow, it very seldom shone even at Drumferlie, where the sun is famous for shining, without doing it often enough to detract from the fame of the thing by making it over common. The sea was laughing all over with blue and light, and there was a delicious summer breeze, warm, but still salt, and fresh, and appetising. Not that I was hungry, for I had fed amply on the road, and was moreover far too much excited with the novelty of things to think of dinner. How long ago, how far away, Drumferlie seemed! I seemed to have been away a month, and to have travelled a thousand miles—and yet I was not

home-sick ; I had survived all that nonsense in my first few college days. I was fairly out in the world now—ay, and seeking my fortune with a vengeance, and a wife as well. And now, I own, I did begin to wonder about what Miss Effie Reid would turn out to be. I knew she was young, but that tells one nothing. I had never even seen her photograph,—such things were less common then than now,—and if I had, I should even then have had too much sense to trust an artist so extravagantly incapable of truth as the sun. So much for what I should think, when I saw her, of Effie Reid. But ah ! what would Effie Reid think, on her side, of me ? It was wonderful to think I had been so bold and confident a wooer at Drumferlie when, in the Isle of Wight, my courage had already oozed as far as the tips of my fingers. Was any left in the end of my tongue ? I felt instinctively that neither mathematics nor metaphysics, nor even the weather and the crops, would be subjects likely to win a lady's ear ; and when I compared my apparel with that of the fine gentlemen lounging up and down, I felt, for the first time of my life, distrustful of the skill of MacKail, our town tailor, though he and his forefathers had clothed me and mine for over eighty years. At home, I always felt dressed with the best ; here, on the contrary, my sleeves felt quarrelling with my elbows, and my trousers shrunken ; I felt raw-boned, and ill at ease. My boots, too, suddenly seemed to grow in size and weight, and the same feeling came over my ungloved hands. I can confess it now without

a pang—I felt exactly what I am sure I must have looked: a raw, rough, ungainly, shy, awkward Scots lad, as much out of place among the disembodied residents and the annually flocking visitors as most of these would have been if pitched down in the middle of Eerie Moss in a mist at three o'clock of a wintry morning.

However, faint heart never won fair lady, nor her fair fortune either, and it is not your raw, rough, ungainly, shy, awkward Scots lad, wherever he may be pitched by fate, who is given to fail. I certainly was not going to put the tail of a Plackless of Drumferlie between his legs; and just then the band at the pier-head struck up a tune. I don't know what it was, but it was a lively crash, and seemed to suit with the soft yet fresh blow of the breeze and the laughing sea. So I gave my portmanteau in charge, to be taken to the town end of the pier, and set out to walk, thinking, to the tune of the band, what I should think of Effie, and what Effie would think of me. And then—then I saw my whole life unrolling itself before me like a vision: Lieutenant in the Black Watch, captain, major, lieutenant-colonel, general, baronet, field-marshal, and G.C.B., finally Laird of Drumferlie, and restorer of the House of Plackless to all generations. And I'd never forget whose silver had bought me my first steps, and I'd be a true and grateful husband to the silver lady.

"My hat—oh, my hat!" cried a voice; "oh, it's gone!" and before my face, almost into my eyes, flew a thing of feathers and lace, the sight of which would

have startled my mother even more than it did me. I made a plunge after it, and was just in time to save it from the sea. As it was, I was nearly into the sea myself, for I had to double myself over the rails, and reach down till, in spite of the length of my legs, my toes were nearly off the floor.

"Thank you so much!" said the voice again, with a little laugh that suggested, in a curious manner, brightness and freshness of the sea's sparkling smile. I have said that I had never looked at a woman twice, but I had several times done so once, and, as I returned the hat, not much the worse for its attempted flight, I looked once at the owner. She arranged it as well as she could without a looking-glass, and did not seem to see or heed whether I looked at her or no; so I looked again.

And so would you have looked a second, or, if you had had the chance, a third time. She was just the daintiest little creature I had ever seen—not higher than my shoulder, hat, hair, and all, and prettier than the sunshine, like a princess out of a fairy tale. My uncle Archie could have knocked her off in a stanza, I dare say, but I can only swear that I'd never seen eyes, nor cheeks, nor hair, nor lips, nor anything before. And I can tell you, without a rag of Uncle Archie's mantle, that her eyes were of a wonderful sort of deep blue, and her hair an equally wonderful sort of brown, and her colour as bright and glowing as a sunrise at home. But above all, there was a winsome look about her, half saucy,

half gentle and tender, that seemed to—— Reader, I have spent twenty-six minutes trying to find words wherewith to express what it seemed to do, and the more I try the more I fail. Even her dress was something wonderful, and as if it had been made by Titania's court dressmaker. I'd not seen many well-dressed girls then, it's true ; but I've seen plenty since, and I still hold to my first opinion, that not one of them is fit to be named with that girl even in the matter of clothes, and all the while she'd have looked like a fairy princess if she'd chosen to dress like Cinderella after the clock struck twelve. If Effie Reid was to look like this, there was only one thing to be done—to run back again from Ryde to Drumferlie as fast as steam could carry me, and never to think of a pair of epaulettes again. Ask a girl like that to marry me ! I wouldn't dare to ask her shoe.

I suppose I looked like a gowk ; I know I felt like one.

"Thank you very much," said she again, when her hat was quite arranged. And then, with a bow, she turned to go.

I lingered to see if she was with any friends, and also to see her walk ; for that also was a graceful thing to see. And on my honour I believed myself to be simply and soberly admiring some beautiful work of Nature in a foreign land, as if she were a lake or a waterfall. It was even a relief to think that neither Effie Reid, nor any other girl, could approach this one in beauty, and that, having seen the best, it

would be easier to deal with her inferiors. I believe that girl was the first work of creation that, out of Drumferlie, I had ever consciously admired. Perhaps I had a dull sort of a heart, which wanted, for its waking into life, something beyond the common. Anyhow, I knew that not only had I never seen eyes or lips, but that I had never seen a woman, till now ; and for the first time, as they came into my mind, I understood Uncle Archie's immortal lines :

“ O lassie wi' the lily bree
An' een sae blithe an' blue,
Or e'er I leart to lilt o' thee
Nae aucht I lilted true.
The rose o' lowe, the rose o' snaw
I sang—but, bonnie Bell,
Nocht but her name I'd kent ava,
Noo haith, I've seen hersel' ?”

And Bell, according to the family tradition, was but a cotter's daughter with nothing of the rose about her excepting in her hair, whom Uncle Archie had made famous because her name was rich in rhymes. If he had seen this girl—where would Burns have been ? Archibald Plackless would have played first fiddle, Robert Burns would have been a good second, and everybody else—nowhere.

The girl joined no friends, but stood by herself, looking at the sea and listening to the band. I often hum to myself that tune, even now, and would not know its name for the world. But presently I saw her speak to a porter, waiting for jobs from the boats, and, though I could not hear her words, I could

hear his, and learned that she was in some luggage trouble.

Should I have interfered had this utter stranger been old, ugly, and everything that nobody could call her? I hope so—but I cannot say that my hope reaches faith in this matter. At any rate I did interfere; and I learned that she also had been a passenger in one of the boats from Southampton, that she was waiting to see and claim her luggage, and that it had vanished half-an-hour ago.

Suddenly I remembered that my own portmanteau, when I had sent it off before me to the pier gates, had been accompanied by a large trunk, not my own, but bearing my own initials, J. P., similarly painted in large white letters upon a black cover.

"And so I'm afraid I've carried off your luggage as well as my own," said I. "It's a curious coincidence that our initials should be the same."

"Yes, it must have been mine—Miss Jessie Pennant. I have to thank you twice now—once for my hat, and once for my luggage."

"Which you would not, but for me, have lost at all," said I, as politely as I could, and welcoming the accident which, without an introduction, had put me in possession of her name. Somehow I should never have taken her for a Jessie, because there was a Jessie in Drumferlie, a good old body, from whom I had drawn my ideas of Jessies in general; but now the name seemed to spell itself differently, and to fit its new bearer as well as her gloves, or her voice, or her eyes.

"It will be waiting for us at the gate," said I. "Shall I go and see if it's safe? Or what shall I do?"

"I think I'd better see to it myself; it might not be there after all. Oh, I'm neither so weak nor so lazy that I can't walk the length of the pier."

Had I then known more of men and manners, I should have seen at once that Miss Pennant had been something of a traveller, from the easy, matter-of-course manner in which she accepted the casual civility of a chance stranger, without thinking it necessary to assert the strictness of her insular propriety by snubbing him on the one hand, or, on the other, letting him feel any consciousness on her part of anything special or unusual in the relation of a young man and a young woman merely because accident throws them into company for some passing ten minutes in their lives. She was a traveller who had missed her trunk—I a traveller who could put her in the way of getting it again—that was all. She could not have started on that walk with the least difference of manner had I been three times my age and ten times the gowk that now more than ever I felt myself to be. But if she found nothing out of the common course of travelling in walking some eight hundred and odd yards with a fellow-passenger whom she had never seen before, and would probably never see again, there was a great deal out of the common course of life to me. I could not help feeling myself the observed of all observers as I walked beside this dainty little creature, as if we were

Beauty and the Beast out for a stroll ; and I became filled with a kind of clumsy pride—a little glorious, in fact, as though I had been taking a third tumbler of my father's famous Highland Dew. Nothing would have given me greater pleasure than for one of the biggest of those dandified loons to come up and insult Miss Jessie Pennant, in order that I might have the pleasure of knocking him down.

It never came into my head, however, to say a word ; I was even spared the brain-beating that ensues when we want to say something and can't, for the life of us, find anything to say, for the simple reason that the need of speech was as far from my thoughts as its possibility. But I suppose that when a man can't or won't speak, a woman must, if it's only to find out if he's dumb.

"It's a pleasant day for travelling, especially on the water," said she, as easily as if speaking were the simplest thing in the world.

"It's just heavenly weather," said I, finding it simple enough now. "I suppose you'll have come from far?" for I really could not suppose that she came from an everyday world.

"Only from Southampton," said Miss Pennant. "How well the town and the sea and the trees look from here ! But I suppose it must look all very poor and tame to you who know the Scotch lakes and hills."

"Why, you must be a witch!" exclaimed I in surprise. "How on earth can you tell I come from

Scotland? It's a fact, though—I never crossed the Border till to-day."

She smiled.

"It doesn't need a witch to tell when anybody hails from bonnie Scotland," said she.

"It's true I wouldn't have the English accent," said I, "and it happens I come from Drumferlie, which is famous for speaking the language in its ancient purity. When you next go to Scotland you should go to Drumferlie. It's grand."

"I have never been in Scotland," said she.

"And I'd never been in England—now isn't that strange? And that we've both met at the same place on the same day."

"It would have been even stranger if we had met at different places on different days. This is a very long pier. Is it far to the end?"

"I hope so—that is, I mean it doesn't seem such a very long pier."

"I suppose you have longer ones—perhaps at Drumferlie?"

"Not exactly at Drumferlie. In fact, at Drumferlie there isn't a pier at all. We're just at the top of one hill and the bottom of another. You don't live, then, at this place—Ryde?"

"I've never been here before."

"Why, there's a coincidence for every board in the pier—nor have I. And I suppose you're not staying here very long?"

I could not help a sigh, too deep to be heard; for it

is of the nature of such meetings with such people that they should be brief, and should come but once, and never more. Perhaps, if I had been less absorbed in the thought, I should never have asked a question that just overstepped the line between civil speech and curious questioning. But I've since observed that, under certain circumstances, it's very hard to keep both feet fairly on the right side of the line, without at least a toe lapping over to the wrong.

"For a day or two," said Miss Pennant—just as I supposed ; and yet, somehow, a hope died, so to speak, without having been born.

I felt my heart going out of me towards a strange girl, on whom I had not set eyes till some ten minutes ago—of whom I knew nothing but the name. Don't say yet that she might be a mere adventuress, or worse, for anything I could tell—that her account of her luggage might be a fiction, or anything else of that kind that may, and no doubt will, occur to you. I don't think anything of that kind would have occurred to you while under the immediate influence of her voice and her eyes. But, apart from this, here was I, a cool-headed, cold-hearted, altogether canny young fellow, from the land of long heads well screwed on, letting myself go down before a girl of whom, to say the least of it, I knew absolutely nothing at all—if no ill, certainly no good either. Has every man a fate ? Certainly not, though I have heard hopeless idiots say so. Had I met mine ? Were the hopeless idiots right after all ?

III.

I SHOULD think we must have reached the middle of the pier when a man—I suppose I must, for distinction's sake, call him a gentleman—came into sight, and advanced towards us with a bow and a smile.

I hated him from the first moment I set eyes on him. And yet I could not deny that he was a fine-looking fellow, between whose appearance and my own no comparison, except in his favour, could possibly be made. He was handsome in the Italian style, with a grand figure, a clear brown face, regular features, a fine heavy black moustache, and was dressed to perfection. He made me feel rougher and more raw-boned than ever: and, for the first time, I was seized with an uncomfortable suspicion that Miss Jessie Pennant had been drawing me out and making me talk and look, as well as feel, like a fool. At any rate, the manner in which she met this unexpected friend was irritating to an extreme degree. Serious interest, a tender gravity, took the place of her bright smile as she held out her hand, and allowed it to be grasped warmly and held long. She let him hold it while I could, slowly and deliberately, count five.

Well—what was it to me? Had I supposed that a girl like that would be without a hundred desperate adorers? And who was I, that a ten minutes' acquaintance should give me the smallest right to feel hurt even if she had come to Ryde to be married to-morrow? Absurd! And Miss Pennant had forgotten

my existence as clearly as if I were one of the invisible residents of Ryde. I lounged off to the side of the pier, so that I might let the friends—lovers—acquaintances—betrothed—whatever they were, continue their conversation undisturbed. I even placed myself at such a distance, behind the corner of some wooden edifice or other, that I could not overhear a single word of their conversation, even if I tried. And of course my ears, in spite of my firm determination that they should hear nothing, strained themselves all the more.

How long was the interview going to last? One hour—two hours—three? I thought gloomily of finishing the remaining planks of the pier by myself, seeing about the luggage, and leaving some porter in charge of Miss Pennant's trunk till she came to claim it with more congenial and efficient aid than mine had been. But I could not contrive to move; I hovered about like the proverbial moth who courts the candle. The voices became yet more earnest and yet more low. They approached my corner; I was bound to hear something, whether I would or no. But it did not signify. They were speaking Italian—and though I don't know Italian, thank Heaven, I was Latinist enough to recognise *Amor* and *Anima*—Love and Soul.

A minute afterwards, Miss Pennant was proceeding on her way slowly, and alone. I lounged up to her, with an air of having been humbly waiting her commands and her convenience, and walked silently by her side.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, the light coming back into her face, "how rude I have been! But I had no idea that you had been waiting—of course I thought you would have gone on to the gates. Well, I must do my best by helping you to make up for lost time." And she quickened her speed, at the same time I slackened mine, and so the balance soon became even again.

"This really is a very long pier!" she said. "It's long enough to act out a whole story while one's walking the length of it—beginning, middle, and end."

"No doubt—if one stops long enough in the middle," said I, sullenly.

"Now that is not kind—to remind me of my misdeeds. But really I don't know why you should have waited."

"No. After all, your friend could have recovered your luggage just as well as I. A great deal better, I dare say."

"I really think we had better hurry on."

"Oh, I'm in no hurry at all. I haven't got to catch a train, and my business will keep—very well indeed."

"Then there's not much harm done. If I thought you had been only waiting to enjoy the sunshine——"

"Sunshine? I don't call this sunshine. We call a day like this cloudy at Drumferlie."

"I haven't noticed any change. The gentleman who spoke to me just now was saying that he had never seen lovelier weather away from Naples——"

"Oh—he is Italian, then!"

"An Italian count——"

"Oh—then that accounts for it. They always do."

"Who always do what?" asked she.

"Always say that everything's the loveliest they ever saw. I mean counts always do—I mean Italians."

"I suppose you had a large experience of Italians at—Drumferlie?"

"No, I haven't—thank Heaven!"

"Might not the thanks be mutual? I'm afraid Drumferlie must be——"

"What?" I asked, rather fiercely I am afraid.

"Just a little prejudiced—just the least little bit in the world."

It was astounding. I had not traversed three-quarters of Ryde Pier by the time that I, hitherto guiltless of the smallest flirtation, had met my fate, had fallen in love, had plunged into the agonies of jealousy, and was now in the middle of a sharp quarrel. How on earth had it all happened? And yet there had been nothing forced, nothing unnatural, nothing improbable even, though it mostly takes a month to get through as much life as I had lived in no time.

But suddenly she smiled.

"And I like prejudice," said she, "so long as it's thoroughgoing—every sort and kind. One does get so little—everybody seems to care for nothing but what he hasn't got and can't get; after all, I wouldn't give a straw for anybody who doesn't believe in his own nest first, whatever it may be."

Were we to be friends again? So it seemed. The Italian count still blotted out the sunshine, but her smile came like at least a stray beam through the cloud. Alas! friends for five minutes more, and then—good-bye.

“And your own nest, what is that?” asked I, “and where? In—in—Italy?”

“In a sort of Italy.”

“A sort of Italy? I never heard of a sort of Italy.”

“Oh, there’s an Italy in Europe, and an Italy in England, too. I happen to have an aunt who married a singing-master—that very gentleman who was talking to me just now—and I’ve been living with them this last year. They never speak English, and never eat anything English, and have no English friends. That’s what I mean by a sort of Italy.”

“Then he—that count—is your uncle by marriage?”

“Of course.”

Out came the sun again, brighter, for a moment, than when he had first shone. But the pier gates were growing nearer and nearer now. And could I, a man with a heart and a will, make myself such a slave to the accidents of time and space as to let myself slip adrift from Jessie Pennant, without such an effort as a man might make to keep the first thing that he had ever found worth keeping? Beyond those nearing gates we should part; the meshes of family life would irrevocably and inevitably close me round, and she would be swept off from Ryde, and flutter away down

the wind, out of the world. There were Italians and Italians; and though one might be her uncle, another might become what I would give all I was worth to be. Not that I was worth much; but had I been a Dives instead of a Plackless it would have been the same.

And yet, even then, with those gates in sight that must lead me forth from Eden, I could scarcely forbear questioning my own prudence, or rather how my state of mind would look in other eyes. Suppose I could so manage matters that this should not be my last as well as my first interview with Jessie, for so alone my heart called her now, forgetting her other name. Suppose that she could learn to like me a thousandth part as much as I liked her; and a thousandth part would be enough, seeing the difference between a fairy and a bear. What, if all went as I was desperate enough to dream, what would my father, what would every Plackless in Drumferlie say, when I proposed to bring home a foreign girl, half an Italian—perhaps a Papist into the bargain—with at least twenty guineas on her back and on her head, and most likely not a penny anywhere else about her? It was a bewildering and an awful thought for a man who had never felt or thought otherwise than as a Plackless of Drumferlie since he was born. But——

I have before been brought up hard by an “if”—“but” brings me up harder. Suppose her clothes were her whole fortune, I couldn’t but believe in the girl’s goodness and honesty; I couldn’t help seeing in her a lady born, who would bring grace and manners

into a home which now seemed to me to monopolise such things less completely than some eleven minutes ago. Perhaps there were just a few prejudices in Drumferlie, after all. And if she were even a Papist, a very short course of the sermons of my cousin the minister would be enough to satisfy the Pope himself, and two or three would be quite as many as the most obstinate of opponents would want to hear. It doesn't take the time for stepping over a single plank to think what would take a week for writing. And all at once it was borne in upon me: what was I, after all, but a base, mean, fortune-hunting, mercenary adventurer, who wanted to buy a commission with a girl's money, and was going to catch her for a wife because he couldn't get the money without the girl?

But supposing I were, what then? I vowed I wouldn't even say a civil word to Effie Reid; but that wouldn't bring me a step nearer to Jessie. I had dreamed my dream out; it was time to wake now. And I'd wake before we reached those gates in front of us.

"So," I said, "you're not going to be long in this town?"

There must have been something odd about either my question or my way of asking it, for she looked at me quickly, with a sort of surprise.

"No," said she. "Not many hours, I have just heard."

Then we could never meet again.

"Then I'm just in the same boat myself," said I.

"I've only just come to see—the pier; and then I'm going home, this very day."

"How strange! You have come all the way from Scotland to the Isle of Wight only to see Ryde Pier? Is it one of the seven wonders of the world?"

"It's not one of them; it's all of them in one. I suppose you think you've been walking all this while with a madman, to hear me talk like that of a few sticks and boards, with a band at one end and a portmanteau at the other. If I'd known you a year, Miss Pennant, I'd have a right to say something or other, and I don't see why I wouldn't, because one can't take twelve months to walk from end to end, try as slow as we can."

"Suppose, then, we try a little faster?" said she.

"Then you do think I'm dangerous?" said I.

"Oh no; not at all." But she quickened her pace all the same.

"Lunatic, I mean. Never mind; think it, if you must. But I want to say something now, because I'll never say it again to anybody, anywhere; and I'd like to say it once, to one, before I die. It won't hurt you, when you think of this place; and it may be fun, to remember that a hard-hearted Drumferlie man couldn't walk with you from the band to the portmanteau without finding out he'd got a heart as well as a head, and giving you both of them to carry away with you wherever you go."

I don't know how most women would receive such a declaration under such circumstances, though no doubt

many of them can decide offhand, and yet correctly, whether the declaration was an insult, an act of lunacy, or an honest impulse fairly resulting from their own invincible fascination. Miss Pennant certainly flushed up and stared at me, but she otherwise betrayed neither fear nor confusion, nor lost an atom of her dignity.

"This is very extraordinary behaviour," said she. "I don't even know your name."

I could not even make out whether she was angry—her face, though certainly flushed, told me nothing at all.

"Very," echoed I. "But it isn't half so extraordinary as what I feel. If you were to bid me jump over into the sea and never come out again I'd do it gladly. But I can't undo what has been done, and if I could I wouldn't. What does it matter what I say when in another minute you will be gone, and I shall never see you again? So I'll speak my heart out, just for once, before I crush it down for the rest of my days. My name's James Plackless, the only son of a small Scotch farmer; I'm of no profession at present, and I'm a Master of Arts of Aberdeen. I've got no fortune of my own, and no particular prospects except the farm at Drumferlie, and I don't suppose I'll ever have that if I were to marry against my father's views, and I don't know that it's much worth having. But you can see for yourself I'm big enough to make my own way in the world and the way of any woman who'd trust me, and no Plackless, though he mostly wants money, ever wanted brains. I don't think I've ever done a really

wrong thing, except one—and that's coming to Ryde to court a second cousin, Euphemia Reid by name, that I've never seen, just because she's rich and I'm poor. That's bad ; but I gave it up ages ago, before we got beyond the middle of the pier. And now you know me as well as I know myself ; and if there was the least bit of a chance to win you for a wife I'd do anything on earth that a Plackless of Drumferlie may, and wait for you as long as you please, so it's on this side of for ever."

"Really I don't know whether to be angry or to laugh," said she. "I can't help believing that you're a gentleman, though a strange kind of one. You clearly are not in the habit of waiting for the grass to grow on your farm. Do you know that we never met in our lives till some fifteen minutes ago ?"

"I'm quite sure I've known you fifteen hundred years ; though it was not fifteen minutes, it was only twelve."

"And that, though I now know who you are, you have learned nothing, in all those fifteen hundred years, of me ?"

"I know all I want," said I.

"Now listen to me, Mr. Plackless, and believe that, though I'm young, and have never been at Drumferlie, I know something of the world. I do know enough of you—in twelve minutes—to feel that I may speak to you like a—like a mother. Your father, you say, is a farmer in a small way in a place—well, in Drumferlie. I can see the whole picture as if it were before my

eyes. What would he say if the only son, whom he intends to make the fortune of the family, whom he has kept at college, and all the rest—what would he say if he heard that you had thrown yourself away——”

“Thrown myself away!”

“I can hear him say it—thrown yourself away upon a foreigner, an actress, a strolling woman who has nothing a week but a trifle she can earn in a play-house? I know what he would say!”

And so did I! And I know what I should have said myself thirteen minutes ago.

“Why, a good honest sheep-dog might as well ask a butterfly to marry him.”

“He might; and he does,” said I.

“You are really a remarkable young man. And the sheep-dog thinks that the butterfly would care to give up—well, whatever butterflies think worth having—to milk the cows and bake the cakes in a Scotch farm, with no eyes to admire her but yours? You think the bargain would be fair?”

“No, I don’t,” said I, growing dogged and stubborn. “For your sake I would give up even Drumferlie. I’d work; and there are some things won’t let a man fail when he works for them. I’d win them—you’d have all I could give you, and I’d have you.”

“And your father? And have you no mother? Yes—a man like you is sure to have a mother. What of them?”

“They’d be put out at first; but they married

without a fortune, and they've not done ill. It wouldn't take them a year to come round, when they saw me making a fortune, and found out why, and what a prize I'd won, fortune or no."

"And what prize am I to have? You?"

"I'm not much to look at, I own, but if you want a better husband than I'll be to the only woman I'll ever love, you'll have to wait long and go far."

"Ah, farther than the length of a pier? And you—you would let your wife act in plays?"

"No, I wouldn't."

"If she insisted?"

"Oh, but she wouldn't. When there's a difference of opinion, you know, it's for the husband to decide—that's clear."

"You are really an extraordinary young man. I think—I think you had better see Miss—what was the name?—Miss Euphemia Reid. You haven't by any means a bad idea of love-making, for a first attempt. I've seen far worse action on the stage. Only, the next time, don't tell the lady beforehand that you're not going to let her have her own way. Of course it's nothing to me, but it might lose you the heart, as well as the fortune, of Miss Euphemia Reid."

"Hang Miss Euphemia Reid!" I am not sure that my imprecation was not stronger still. "And hang her fortune too! I'm not going to say, even for the sake of winning you, that I won't be master in my own house, for that I will; but I will win you for a wife—you or none."

"I really believe you mean it," said she. "I—I believe I'm safe in doing an extraordinary thing—as extraordinary as—as——" She paused. "After all, the great thing is not for you to know me, but for me to know you, and you've let me see through you and know you as clearly as if you were made of glass unstained—of crystal. . . . You are as prejudiced as you're high; you are honest at heart, and if you once get an idea fairly into your head, nobody and nothing would get it out again; and you haven't paid me a single compliment—not one. I don't believe you know how. I think—Ah! we are very near our luggage now."

"And I won't pass that gate till I know if you'll let me love you—not that you can help it—but with hope, with or without, which is it to be? Will you ever be the wife of the man who'll love you and live for you better than anybody else ever can——"

"And rule me? Then—yes; I will."

IV.

THE suddenness of such an unexpected ending to my daydream, and of such a beginning to my life's waking, fairly took my breath away. Whatever she was, there was, nevertheless, nothing unmaidenly in her manner of accepting my desperate offer. That she could return my love was impossible, but her answer to it was as frank, straightforward, and natural as was evidently her nature, and I could feel that she had weighed all the

circumstances, had decided by some sort of insight in my favour, and was content to trust me with her life and happiness. Still, as you may well suppose, it was no common surprise, and I hardly knew, for joy and amazement, whether I were on my head or on my heels.

And so, between the pier-head and the gates, I had gone through a whole courtship—admiration, liking, love, jealousy, quarrel, reconciliation, proposal, rejection, persistence, and final acceptance ; and all, save the last, in the most regular and natural way. I had landed a free man, bent on securing an heiress ; I reached the gate engaged to a penniless actress whom I had never seen before.

The situation was too public to admit of more than a clasp of hands. We reached the gate at last.

"And now," asked I, "when shall I see you again ?"

"I have to make a call before I return, but I shall be going back by the next boat to Southampton."

"And so will I."

As if in a dream, our mixed luggage was divided, and she was driven off in some glorified chariot called a fly.

"Anyhow, they won't be able to say at home," I thought proudly, "that she married me for my money ; and as for my rank, the position of a Plackless doesn't seem to be altogether understood south of the Tweed." Of course I would write to my father that very hour, and make a clean breast of things ; and when he and

my mother once saw Jessie they would be sure to come round. Indeed, I could not keep myself from going into a stationer's shop then and there, and writing my letter, which I carried back to post upon the pier while waiting upon those glorified boards for Jessie's return from her call ; but my wits must have been wool-gathering, for I had not gone many yards when a gentleman came up to me holding my letter in his hand.

"You have dropped this, I believe," said he ; " and it is strange that I should be the one to return it to you. Excuse me for saying so, but it is directed to Donald Plackless, Esquire, Drumferlie, N.B. A kinsman of my own."

"And my father," said I.

"Your father ? Impossible !"

Adventures that day seemed likely to have no end.

"It is certainly not impossible," said I, "for it is true. But if you are a kinsman——"

"If ? Is it possible you have never heard of Andrew Reid ? A strange meeting, indeed ! But I—I always understood that your father had but one child, James, and that he——"

"I am James Plackless," said I, "and my father's only child."

It did not prove so cordial a meeting as might be supposed. I would have given a good many shillings not to have met Andrew Reid, and he appeared to be strangely surprised, and not particularly pleased at seeing me. But still we were kinsmen—first cousins

but once removed—and when he asked me to walk back with him to his hotel to be introduced to his woman-kind, my cousins, I could not, for decency's sake, refuse. Blood is thicker than water, but I vowed that all the blood of all the Reids and all the Placklesses should not keep me long from the waterside.

I should see my cousin Effie—I was ashamed to think of her remembering what my intentions had been, and, innocent as she was, my own shame made me hate her very name.

I did not take much note or heed of my cousin Andrew, and answered questions about home without attending to them. I wanted to be alone. We reached the hotel, and a little girl, about six years old, ran out at the door, and leaped into Andrew Reid's arms.

"Papa—papa!" she cried out; "she's come; she's here."

"Who's come, Effie? Who's here? This is my little one, my Euphemia. Effie, kiss your cousin James," he said rather dolefully, holding out the little one to me.

"This my cousin Effie?" asked I. "Why, I understood she was nearly as old as I."

"And I—I thought you were nearly as young as she!" said Andrew Reid. "Your father always wrote of you as his wee Jamie, and I thought—I fancied—but never mind now. Ah, Jessie, so you've come in time. Cousin James, this is my step-daughter Jessie, my wife's child; my wife was a widow, you know, and Jessie has been at school in Germany and Italy and

France and England, and everywhere. Jessie, this is James Plackless, your second cousin-in-law. We're all off to Southampton by the next boat. Come in."

What else he said I know not. For there stood my Jessie, regarding me with a curious smile.

My story is told, and I have nothing left to tell but a stray scrap of a long talk that I had with Jessie on board the *Vectis*, bound for Southampton.

"I suppose what I did was bold?" said she, "but I pretty well knew who you were from the beginning, and if I hadn't seen in five minutes what sort of a—never mind what—you are, I should have been blind. I saw all those fatherly mistakes, too. I didn't fall in love with you, don't think that; perhaps that may take some time. But, to tell you a secret, I've no sentiment in my nature, not a grain. I'm the most sensible girl I ever knew. I saw you'd make the very husband I always meant to have, if I ever had any—a man with a straight heart, and a straight mind, whom I could trust and who'd trust me.

"Luive, if ever luive sall graw,
Will last betwixt us twa,'

as Archie Plackless sings. I'm not altogether an un-Drumferlie woman, you see. But if I'd said no, we should never have met again till you'd found out I was a rich woman, Cousin James, and then, if you'd asked me, I should never have got it out of my head that you were treating me as you meant to treat my little sister Effie. For shame, to lay plots for an heiress not seven

years old! But I may say now that I'm my poor mother's only child, and she was a rich woman, and all she had was mine. I'm afraid my good step-father is a little put out, but your father won't take a year to come round; I rather fancy not so long as it took us to walk along Ryde Pier. So I said yes, like a sensible girl as I am."

"You told me you were an actress, Jessie! And that count, your uncle——"

"Oh, the count is my mother's sister's husband; that was all right enough. But I never said I was an actress."

"Jessie!"

"No—never! I only asked you what your father would say if I were."

On the anniversary of that summer day I, Major Plackless, of Drumferlie, solemnly and gratefully drink to him, whoever he was, who had the first inspiration of adding three hundred yards to the original length of Ryde Pier, and who thus made me the husband of the best and dearest wife in the world,—ay, and in all Drumferlie.

THAT QUEER MR. HARPER.

BY FRANCES GERARD.

I.

THERE are in the very heart of London, and in the midst of its most crowded thoroughfares, certain retired nooks and old-fashioned corners which have been, as it were, forgotten by the tide of bustle and life outside, and upon which a sort of decay and general mouldiness have settled down.

One of these is a quaint, old-world spot called Nelson Square. That it was either built or christened in honour of the great sea chief seems probable, for the centre of the stunted little grass plot, dignified with the name of Square, is adorned by a figure raised upon a pedestal, and as the figure has only one arm, and wears a cocked hat, we may reasonably suppose it was originally meant for the hero of Trafalgar; but time, hard weather, and neglect have reduced the Admiral to a sorry plight, and a more draggled, dissipated, battered specimen of the British Navy can hardly be conceived. The Square itself being long and narrow, and the stunted grass inside the railings being in some parts

worn down and trodden into the similitude of pauper graves, forcibly recalls a neglected, unused churchyard ; while the melancholy engendered by reminiscence adds to the general air of desolation which pervades Nelson Square. The houses, about thirty in number, are, for the most part, unlet ; they are tall, straight, cinnamon-coloured, with small-paned windows, uneven steps, and pointed architraves over the hall doors. There is no look of light or life in them. One by one they fell vacant, but no new-comers came, nobody being found to step into the shoes of those who had gone. A few remain, kept there by economy, for the rents are low, or clinging on to the place through the force of habit and old associations, which is as an iron chain grappling some of us to one spot ; and this was the case with John Harper. He had lived in Nelson Square, child, boy, and man, over fifty years. Such of the joys of life as had fallen to his share had dawned and blossomed in its dull rooms, and to him the memory of what had been still touched up the dingy walls with a radiance not to be found elsewhere.

Moreover, setting all sentiment aside, there were other reasons why John adhered to 10, Nelson Square. It lay, as it were, under the shadow of the Great Leviathan Museum, which absorbs into its bosom the very essence of such men's brains.

Here, at all hours of the day, Mr. Harper was to be found. He came early, he left late. He was as well known as the Egyptian mummies, an occasional interchange of civilities with a brother Dry-as-dust being

the only interruption to a course of study which continued after his return home long into the night. The result of this—the great labour of his life—had not yet seen the light ; but his name was known in connection with different papers appearing at different times, all remarkable for wonderful research and elaborate composition.

Among men of a certain class Mr. Harper was highly considered. The book vendors and gatherers of Aldines and Elzevirs, the searchers after rare editions and first editions, knew him well, both in the character of purchaser and rival bidder. They respected a man who understood so well their trade and mania, with a reverence totally incomprehensible to those who do not share this absorbing taste. John was a true bibliographer. He attended sales with the keen zest with which other men follow pleasure. It was the one way in which he spent money, for he lived sparingly, and at any time would have preferred an original edition to a good dinner. Such were his tastes, for it is needless to say John was a monk in regard to the finer portion of humanity. Women had been to him for many years a sealed book, and he had no wish to re-open the pages of a volume wherein he had once upon a time written his name with much grief of heart ; but that was—well, it was more than a quarter of a century ago, and John Harper's hair was showing white streaks now, and round his dark eyes the crows of night vigils had made their mark. His dress, too, had that careless indifference which shows the lack of female influence ; not

artistic carelessness, well considered and to a certain degree æsthetic, but downright slovenly—that was John. As he went along in comfortable, ill-fitting clothes, coarse in texture, baggy in make, a large pot hat on his head, trousers flapping round his giant boots, and his large hands ungloved—it would have gone hard with either mother, wife, or sister to see him such an ungainly figure ; but in Nelson Square and the British Leviathan no one cared, and John himself hugged his independence, and jeered at the fine popinjays who sometimes crossed his path. It was, however, to one of these very popinjays that John became indebted for no less a boon than his very existence. One afternoon, a very foggy one it was, when striding home from the Leviathan, his head in the air and his mind in the middle ages, he went right under the wheels of a monster dray, driven by a drunken waggoner, who did not care one jot whether he deprived the world of a great bibliographer or not. This consummation was, however, fortunately averted by the occupant of a passing hansom, who saw the coming danger, jumped out at no small risk to himself, and dragged Mr. Harper from under the horses' feet.

He was a slight, handsome young fellow, with a certain air of high breeding about him, which struck even John's stunned senses, as the two stood looking at one another under a lamp-post, with a gaping crowd gathering round them. They made a curious contrast. John, his pot hat gone, his coat torn, his face pale, and his iron-grey locks scattered, looked rather a forlorn

specimen of genius ; while his deliverer had not, as the saying goes, "turned a hair." He was as calm and self-possessed as if nothing had happened, and took the praises of the mob and the thanks of John with almost indifference. A moment more and Mr. Harper was being whirled along in his young friend's cab, who, when he had safely conveyed him home, fetched a doctor, and sent his own man to make things more comfortable for the invalid, who, it was found, had broken his arm ; and, in this way, a sort of friendship grew up between this very incongruous pair. Young Lord Fitzhurst was not clever, but he wanted very much to pass as such, much as some dilettante noblemen affect art, knowing little or nothing of it. Fitzhurst fastened upon John as his guide, philosopher, and friend ; his introducer to men of talent ; his godfather in literature. This was his idea ; and in furtherance of it he haunted Nelson Square, and was a perpetual interruption to the quiet student, until Mr. Harper began to like the young man, and feel his heart gradually open to a certain interest in his talk of his mother and sisters, who were down at Debden Priory, in the pretty county of Kent.

"You would like my sister Hilda, awfully," the young lord said. "She is awfully clever, knows a lot, and can hold her own, I can tell you. She met Professor Tyneley down at Birmingham, and he was floored. I don't think Hilda will ever marry," he went on ; "she says science is her spouse."

"It will be the kindest thing in the world if you

will come down and see us," he said one day, "for I want to get the library in order; they tell me it's a fine collection, but it wants overhauling. I don't know enough about these things, you see, and Grant and Duff propose sending down one of their men to put it in order."

"Don't let them lay a finger on them!" John cried, roused out of his apathy. "Grant is a perfect heathen. I wouldn't trust him with *my* books. I'll run down myself and look them over, but you mustn't ask me to mix in any of your gay doings, for, as you see, I am a musty old bachelor, quite unfit for ladies."

In promising this much, Mr. Harper felt he was making a great sacrifice of his dearly-loved quiet, but he thought it was due to this young saviour of his worthless life, and he made himself ready with much inward misgiving.

"I must have been beside myself when I agreed to go to this young lordling," he said to himself. "What have I to do with fashionable ladies, and popinjay lords? They'll look upon me as a sort of scarecrow, set up to frighten the birds. I will stay only one day, just to see that Grant hasn't played any of his tricks, and then I'll get away."

It was the night before he left home that this idea came to him, bringing with it some little relief; but when the time actually arrived he was still inconsolable. He looked round his dingy, book-lined room with eyes of affection. To him it was dearer than a king's chamber, this musty, ill-kept, not over clean room,

with no view from its narrow-paned windows but the churchyard square of unmown grass, and the drunken similitude of England's greatest sailor standing in the middle ; and no view inside but books of all kinds invading every corner, filling the shelves to overflowing, piled up, mounting one over the other in untidy heaps on the floor, or standing edgeways, half-opened and turned down for reference, on the mantelshelf or centre table. Truly it was a sight to see, and enough to give even a reading man a nightmare.

II.

"Woman, be fair, we must adore you,
Smile, and the world is all before you."

DEBDEN PRIORY, the seat of Lord Fitzhurst, was a dreamy old place ; its grey stone front had a venerable look, and there was about it a certain gloomy silence, as of age and historic tradition. As its name denoted, it had been church property. Once upon a time a monastery had flourished there, and made its mark too, for the Debden monks were men of talent, and had attained no little celebrity ; traces of them still remained, as in the inscription over the old porch or entrance, monastic in its character, "*Laborase est crase,*" also the ruins of a church at a little distance from the abbey itself, the broken arch of what had once been a cloister ; the home presentment of one Prior Thomas, a famous character in his day. These relics were shown with a certain pride by the present owners ; and, in virtue of her great learning, it had fallen into the hands of Hilda

the clever to exhibit these treasures. She did so now to Mr. Harper, who went over them silently, sadly, as was his wont when confronted with things of antiquity.

"I don't like your Mr. Harper," Miss Hilda remarked, upon her return from this antiquarian expedition. "He is as dull as an owl. Clever! I don't believe it, and he has the manners of a bear!" The young lady was put out, and with some reason. John had treated her with scant politeness; her constant gabble and smattering of what he knew so well disturbed him exceedingly. He was glad to take refuge in the library. There, too, she would have followed him, for she considered him her rightful property; but, when driven to bay, Mr. Harper could defend himself. He had had quite enough of this self-asserting but very ignorant young lady, unlovely and unloving—everything a girl should not be, in his opinion; so he dismissed her not too civilly. "When I have work to do, I must be alone," he said gravely, and held the door for her to go. She went, angry, mortified; but for her feelings John cared little. He smiled grimly to himself. "She is right to choose her spouse in science, for no *man* would ever have her," he thought, and then pondered a minute on the dangerous possession of a little knowledge, especially in the hands of a silly girl; and then Miss Hilda passed from his thoughts.

A quaint, most delightful room was the library at Debden. The pleasantest view stretched out from its five large abbey-shaped windows. The luxuriance of green, the undulation of hill and dale, the picturesque

grouping of trees and water which forms so remarkable a feature of the Kentish country, was here in its perfection—a feast to the eye, a rest to the mind. The room itself was in keeping—a beautifully fretted roof, supported by pillars of airy grace, a polished floor, and bookcases reaching to the very ceiling, nay, in the very ceiling, for curiously contrived panels or entablatures were made to open from the outside, and held some of the choicest of the collection. The books were good, that John saw at a glance ; but, as a collection, it could hardly be considered much. Mr. Harper went over them eagerly, whistling to himself, as was his manner when busy or excited. There was terrible neglect, gross ignorance in arrangement and classification ; immense weeding would be requisite. Still there were some treasures, and his eyes lit up as he drew them forth.

There was a large party at Debden, made up of the usual materials familiar to country-house visiting—the married pairs and the unmarried ; the musical sisters, who sang duets in the evening ; the loud officer, and the tall youth, born to be the butt of the company, especially that of the loud officer, and the stray men who came and went. Replicas of this description make up the ordinary run of country society, and the Debden party went through the usual phases. They rode and played tennis, “the young men and the maidens” flirted and danced, they were perpetually in consultation devising some amusement, something which fell under the category of fun, and their fun seemed to

Mr. Harper a dreary sort of business after all. The dressing up of a man as a woman, or *vice versa*, did not impress him as being Swiftian in humour; but he looked on at these gambols with much of the air a large Newfoundland appreciates the vagaries of small curs. On the other hand, his eccentricities of dress and manner tried the nerves of his hostess, and excited the risible muscles of the younger portion of the company; they tittered when Mr. Harper came tumbling in, or sat down upon the edge of a small chair, to the imminent risk of its annihilation; they mimicked his shambling walk and ill-cut clothes; but they liked him. Lady Fitzhurst, indeed, shrugged her shoulders.

"A friend of my son's," she said; "he picks up such queer people—so does Hilda—they adore genius; but I must say, *for a clever man*, Mr. Harper is not at all *ungentlemanly*."

In all truth, the good lady was well pleased to have a specimen of the "clever man" amongst the company. His eccentricities even made him more interesting, and he made a nice contrast, she thought, amongst the well-bred, fashionable nonentities, just as an old piece of chippendale gives a certain air of distinction. From this it will be gathered that her ladyship had not an extended mind, she was more or less *bornée*, but she was kind-hearted when nothing crossed her path, and she encouraged no laughing at her guest's expense—at least, openly.

Nevertheless, a good many jokes went on about him in private; and Alice Fitzhurst, a sweet-faced, laughter-

loving little damsel, with eyes full of vivacity, and a mouth that dimpled into smiles by a sort of instinct, christened him "Jumbo."

"For he is a dear old thing," she said, enthusiastically, "and I like him ever so much."

"That's more than he does you," her sister Hilda, the clever, remarked crossly. "You bore him to death with your silly talk. I noticed him last night, when you were telling him that farrago of nonsense about the lines of his hand. I declare I was ashamed of you."

"Then you might have saved yourself that sensation," Alice returned, her mischievous eyes dancing in her head. "'Jumbo' was awfully pleased when I told him that he had been crossed in love, but that it would be all right next time. You should have seen his face. Perhaps he is in love with you, Hilda?"

Hilda's face flamed. "Don't talk folly," she snapped.

"Oh, you are too clever for him. Your real clever swells never like any women but silly ones. Now, I am more to 'Jumbo's' liking, ain't I, Edith?" And Alice looked round for support to one of the musical sisters, who, seated at the piano, was humming over a rather intricate second. It was a wet morning, and the men had gone out shooting, so the young ladies generally were thrown upon one another for amusement, and, being more or less stranded, Mr. Harper's name had come up for discussion of a rather lengthened character.

"I am glad you are aware of your own value, my dear," Hilda returned, with a certain grim irony. "You

are certainly silly enough to please any clever man, if such be his taste ; but you need not trouble yourself about Mr. Harper—the books are finished, and he is going away."

"But he will come back again for our ball?" Alice went on.

"Pshaw, don't be silly, child!"

"See if he doesn't: and, what's more, we'll make him dance. Let's draw lots for who'll undertake it."

As I said before, the young ladies were dull, and this proposal was received with acclamation. There was a good deal of talking, no end of laughter, the outcome of which was an improvised lottery; slips of paper being put in a hat and drawn by the girls, a pocket handkerchief being tied across their eyes to make all sure.

The sound of their laughter reached Mr. Harper as he sat in the library,—his task was coming to an end,—but he laid down a bundle of rare pamphlets, touching on the French Revolution, and opened the door that he might hear better. His face softened as a light girlish laugh, like a chime of silver bells, came floating down the corridor to where he stood.

"The golden age," he murmured—"the age of laughter and joys—and she, the brightest of all bright things." He went back to the table, sighing heavily, and took up his bundle of pamphlets again; somehow they had lost their interest for him.

Just then there came the sound of clapping of hands; the game was over.

The prize, that is, John Harper, lay in Alice's slender fingers; and on her devolved the task of making "Jumbo" dance.

The next morning, when John came into the library, to his surprise he did not find it empty as usual. A dainty little figure was perched upon the step ladder, book in hand. At first, with a slight shiver, he thought it was the clever Hilda, but the first sight of the pretty rose-leaf face showed him his mistake.

"You won't mind me," said the sweet treble of Alice Fitzhurst. "I won't disturb you, Mr. Harper. I came to ask a great favour of you, but I was too soon; and then I began this, and I can't stop just yet, it is so nice."

She held towards him a little paper of his, an essay upon "Boswell's Johnson," which he had given Fitzhurst.

John flushed like a schoolgirl when he saw it in her hands. "You—you—are pleased with it!" His voice was eager, his manner deferential, more so towards this young critic than he would have been to a writer in the *Saturday Slasher*.

"I don't like the way you praise that tiresome old man," the young lady went on, fixing her eyes upon the unfortunate follower of the great lexicographer, "I do not indeed. I cannot fancy what you see to like in him. I daresay it is exceedingly stupid of me to say such a thing, because of course I am only a foolish girl; still, you must own, Mr. Harper, it was very unkind of him to speak of us poor women as he did."

I don't know what John's literary colleagues would

have thought of him for his puerile weakness. It is quite certain, nevertheless, that he entered no protest against this denunciation, nor made any defence. He murmured some words which sounded like reprobation of the philosopher's conduct in regard to the fair sex, adding that "had he known what an inappreciable blessing they were, and what sunshine they conferred, he, the philosopher, would not have dared to so malign them." And Alice smiling sweetly in return for this rather laboured compliment, John felt as if he could have abandoned all his preconceived admiration for Dr. Johnson to earn such a reward. The next moment the young girl jumped down, light as a bird, from the ladder, and stood beside him.

"I am so glad that you think we are so nice," she said, looking at him slyly, "for now perhaps you won't refuse me my little request. Mr. Harper," she went on, in a pretty fluttering way peculiar to her, "if I want you very, very much to do something for me, won't you do it?"

Now that his deity had actually come so close to him that her eyes were looking into his, John's abnormal shyness returned upon him tenfold. He shuffled his feet nervously, and crumpled up the leaves of some papers he had in his hand.

"Anything, I am sure," he began, "any use——"

"As I don't want to be a B.A. like Hilda, or to ask you to help me to write a book—but, Mr. Harper, I am afraid we haven't made you happy here—that distresses me—you are such a friend of Fitzhurst's."

"Happy!" John echoed her words, and then laughed rather a dreary laugh. "I am afraid, Miss Alice," he said, "you think me an old bookworm, fit for nothing but dried-up parchments. Well, I am not much better. I have let much of the brightness of life slip out of my grasp; it is too late to get it back now. For years and years I have had no companions but my books—good friends, I thought them; till I came here I had well-nigh forgotten the sound of happy voices, the music of youthful laughter. It is very pleasant to me, Miss Alice; I shall hear it often in my lonely room."

"Then why do you go away, Mr. Harper?" she said, with a little petulant movement of her girlish shoulders. "I don't believe you like us when you leave us; won't you promise to come back for our ball next month, Mr. Harper? Say you will."

John's eyes were on the ground; his heart, poor silly man, was beating wildly. He couldn't speak, not if you had given him a million.

"I'm afraid you are just like Dr. Johnson, after all," she added, "indeed you are. Hilda was right when she told me I bored you, and that you didn't care for a stupid, frivolous girl like me!"

"Did she say that?" cried John, passionately. "Why, from the first moment I entered this house—from the first moment I—— But what am I saying, Miss Alice? Of course I shall come to your ball, come if it was from the end of the world!"

III.

"Wherefore sighing, dwellest lonely,
Years are flying, leaving only
Of their cares a record seared."

MR. HARPER's old friends and associates in the British Leviathan and elsewhere did not know in the least what to make of him on his return from Debden; there was a levity of demeanour about him in handling important subjects so unlike his usual eagerness upon any point connected with antiquarian research as to raise serious doubts concerning the state of his brain.

But if the change in John's demeanour excited remarks amongst his literary brethren, the vagaries he indulged in, in the privacy of Nelson Square, fairly amazed the woman who had him in charge. This person, who had "done for him" for years, providing him with what little he required, was now so exercised in her feelings that after careful consideration she came to the conclusion that the moment had arrived for threatening him with a warning.

"I ain't no fool, sir," she said to him, "and I sees into a puddle as well as into clear water; for the matter of that the whole square sees it. Mrs. Mackins, next door, she ses to me only yesterday, 'What's come of *your gentleman*, Mrs. Crean?' ses she; and Vatcher's man passed the same remark. So it's pretty plain, as I said before, you're thinking of making a change; I am not blind, thank God, and I keep my eyes open, and always did; and when I sees how parcels is a-

coming in, which never was such a thing in my time ; how it's boots as is one day, and hats another ; shirts—as indeed was a-wanting, and socks which have gone that down that there is one break from heel to toe—and a *tail coat* ! best cloth, come from Smallpage, in Bond Street. Which so long as I am here, now nigh on fifteen year, for I come when your precious mother was here, and a comfort it was to look at her, and since that day I have been a faithful servant, doing for you to the best of my power."

Here Mrs. Crean's feelings began to overpower her. Her apron went to her eyes, and John, struggling between vexation and amusement, ordered her downstairs.

"Don't let me hear any more of this nonsense," he said ; but after she had taken herself away he sat for a long time in deep thought. Mrs. Crean's words had made a tangible reality of the floating vision which had haunted him constantly since he had quitted Debden. The whole square noticed a change ! People of the outside world did not think him then too old to—well, make a fool of himself ; and involuntarily he smiled at the thought. Then, rising, he stood before the round old-fashioned mirror which was over the mantelpiece, examining himself critically, as it were, with a magnifying glass, looking for the alterations which had been made a matter of remark. What he saw there did not please him. How grey his face was ; how deep the lines ; what terrible marks of care—ridiculous to think of him as a lover of one so fresh and fair as Alice

Fitzhurst—a madman's dream. With a heavy sigh Mr. Harper turned back to his books, but these old friends palled upon him of late. After all they say nothing to a heart craving for sympathy, in need of the friendly pressure of a human hand. The most authentic Elzevir, the rarest Aldine that ever bibliographer possessed, cannot still pain such as John felt, nor stem the torrent of vain regret which poured itself like a deluge over his soul. Between him and the page he vainly strove to read there was ever flitting the dainty figure, the sweet girlish face with its sunny smile and confiding expression. He could not put it from him, although he knew it was not for him. Mrs. Crean's words had brought with them an awakening, and now, as he sat listlessly, book in hand, he was making up his mind slowly, as was his wont, but, as he thought, irrevocably, that he would not go back to Debden.

Just as Mr. Harper had arrived at this low-spirited conclusion the postman's knock disturbed him. John had few correspondents; an occasional invitation from a fellow bibliophile, the catalogue of an approaching sale, or the proofs of any article he was busy on,—these made up the sum of his communications with the outer world. It was therefore with war in her eye that Mrs. Crean now brought in a little salmon-coloured envelope, and slapped it down upon the table near Mr. Harper with an aggressive thud. She regarded him with an air of hostility as he took it up in his hand, turning it over curiously. On the outside was one of

those hieroglyphic jumbles in which ladies delight—a tangle of spider-legged letters. “Salmon honvelopes and munegrumps,” Mrs. Crean muttered as she went downstairs. “Well, the Lord be blessed if ever I see such a fool!” She might have endorsed that verdict if she had witnessed the antics her master indulged in after reading the contents, written in an unformed girlish hand.

“DEAR MR. HARPER,—I hope you won’t think it very bold of me to write to you, but you are such a friend of Fitzhurst’s. I want to remind you of your promise about the ball. Please, please don’t disappoint, I want you to come so much.

“Yours sincerely,

“ALICE FITZHURST.”

It was a fresh May day when Mr. Harper, once more wended his way to Debden, but there was now no reluctance in his movements, no lingering over quitting his dingy study. He stepped forth with a pleasant smile upon his face, and though Mrs. Crean’s frosty features would, in homely phrase, have turned sour even the adulterated article which did service in Nelson Square for cream, even this failed to disturb our hero. He was in a region high above such trivial considerations, living in that atmosphere of cerulean blue called a lover’s paradise. He was more inclined to laugh at his housekeeper’s aggravating ways than take them in bad part, and this serenity on his side only increased the venom on hers.

Mr. Harper reached Debden in good time ; the day was still young, and the sun shining, when he drove up the long avenue, and stood in the shadow of the grave old porch, with the defaced inscription of "*Laborare est crase*" overhead. He stood there a minute—a sense of the incongruity of his position forcing itself upon him. Now that he was actually on the threshold of what to him was so momentous an undertaking, it seemed to him simply monstrous that he should ever have thought of it ; he was ready to turn and fly sooner than meet the bright eyes of his young love, and the astonishment his audacity might call into them. All his doubts and fears, his distrust of himself, and his unworthiness returned upon him tenfold ; so did the tumultuous throbbings of his heart, the terrible distress of his mind. His white face, his curious manner, startled the grave menial who let him in ; he looked doubtfully at him, and thought rather uncharitably of our philosopher as he led him through the hall. All about lay the preparations for the night's festival ; servants were hurrying hither and thither, removing heavy pieces of furniture. Everywhere there was bustle and confusion, the doors standing open, and busy figures flitting about ; even the sacred library seemed to be given over to the general disruption. This hurly-burly grated somewhat upon Mr. Harper's nerves, strung as they were to an unusual pitch of excitement ; he stopped short, muttering something to the man about having come too early, and then went back through the porch and out into the park, leaving

the grave functionary staring at him in no little wonder.

It was a delicious afternoon ; the air was balmy with the soft breath of spring, the birds were singing, the wood-pigeon cooing gently to his lady-love, and the little grubs and insects made a murmur all through the air ; over all things there was love and peace. It was as if Nature were keeping a holiday, and meant to make it pleasant all round ; and yet, underlying all the brightness, behind all the sunshine, there were shadows. Even on this sweet spring afternoon there was many a poor stricken soul to whom this joyous air which nature assumed was an offence, this sunshine an additional pang, a cruel mockery of their own desolation. Something of this sort penetrated John's mind in a dim manner as he strode through the Debden woods, crushing with his large feet the tender little primroses, the sweet daisies which made a carpet for him to walk on. He was not given to moralizing, but as he walked he became conscious of soft and tender influences stealing over him ; now and again he raised his head and looked upon the tranquil beauty of the scene before him ; he inhaled the fragrance of the violet-scented air with a certain sense of pleasure ; the soft cooing of the wood-pigeon, the exquisite singing of the birds, sent a thrill of happiness through him, and stilled the painful beating of his heart ; for the first time in his life he bowed before the great work of the Creator. As he advanced through the wood his eyes fell upon two figures at some little distance from

him ; they were sitting under the shadow of one of the fine old beech trees, whose spreading branches made a shelter for them. They were sitting close to one another. Mr. Harper noticed that, and smiled to himself ; he was more indulgent to this sort of folly than he would once have been. He even thought he would make a little *détour*, so as not to disturb these lovers, for such they were he saw at a glance. Before he could execute this manœuvre, however, one of them started up, and, running forward a few steps, cried in an eager voice, "Why, it is Jum—! Jumb—! it's Mr. Harper, I mean ;" and then John saw Alice Fitzhurst standing in his path, with her hands stretched out to meet him, and her pretty face all aglow with pleasure, confusion, and something else which had not been there before. A terrible light broke in upon poor John, crushing him with the certainty of the inevitable. He stood quite still while the young girl poured out in her pretty way a whole torrent of pretty nothings ; her eyes dancing in her head, her colour coming and going. "And this is Harry," she said, "you remember him, Mr. Harper ; he was here last time,—Captain L'Estrange ; don't you recollect he used to dance the schottische with me every night ?" She laughed again as she said this, blushing hotly ; and John, with his heavy eyes fixed upon her face, took the proffered hand of the Captain, who had now joined them ; he did it in a mechanical manner ; he had no recollection of this tall, fair, rather good-looking young fellow, with a good-humoured face, but he did not say so ; his great effort was to say as

little as he could ; he thought the tone of his voice would betray him. But he need not have taken such care ; they talked to him and to one another, and, with the proverbial selfishness of happy lovers, gave very little thought to anything but themselves, and, so talking, they made their way through the woods.

By-and-bye John's gravity communicated itself to his companions ; they grew more silent, and, at a turn in the walk that led to the stables, Captain L'Estrange took himself off after a few whispered words. His absence was a relief, but even when he was alone John found it impossible to speak—*no words would come*, and it was Alice who began the conversation.

"Are you *very* surprised?" she said, looking up and down in her usual faltering way, and pulling at some flowers she held in her hand. "Every one else is. No one suspected us," and then she laughed a delightful laugh of happy content.

"Then it is all settled?" Mr. Harper returned, in a voice which sounded so strangely harsh that Alice started a little at the tone, and looked at him curiously.

"I thought you would have been so glad that I was going to be happy," she said, "and I quite counted on your helping me with mamma and Fitzhurst. They are making all sorts of objections because Harry is poor ; but I don't mind that when we love one another. Don't you think I am right?"

She looked up into his face, her brown eyes seeming larger and deeper for the new life that had come into

them, and he stood quite still, looking down on the dainty little figure beside him, in her pretty frock and picturesque hat, a tide of passionate feelings struggling within him as he remained gazing at her.

Then she had never understood him ; from the first it had been a mistake. She had been joking, that was all ; while he, good heavens ! he had poured out the whole strength of his nature, the love and the tenderness which had lain dormant for many years, and given it away into the keeping of this Dresden china shepherdess. Yes, that was what poor John in his heart called her. His soul was full of bitterness, and he covered his face with his hands, groaning aloud in the depth of his pain.

That night Mr. Harper returned to London. The idea of mixing with the gay party at Debden, looking on at their jousts and revels, was inexpressibly horrible to him ; to escape from them his leading idea. He lost no time putting it into execution ; not even returning to the Priory, where his portmanteau remained in pledge, he made the best of his way to the station, arriving there in time for a late train. As to any one's opinion of this sudden flight, John thought little, and cared less. His mind was too full of the blow which had fallen upon him to admit of such trifles gaining entrance. He was suffering terribly, and this suffering of his was no evanescent burst of feeling which passes away as young men's fancies do, leaving their hearts free for another love to occupy the place of the dead one. For him there was no other face but Alice Fitz-

hurst's ; no other voice sounded in his ear ; no other love filled his heart.

It must not be supposed, however, that Mr. Harper allowed his disappointment to be evident to the world—his world, I mean. He was too shy to wear his heart upon his sleeve, and after the first he accepted the situation—at least, so far as his outer life was concerned. He returned to his old ways, going the old round in a graver, more melancholy fashion, but still filling his old place. Each day he seemed to grow greyer, sadder ; his shoulders more stooped, his gait more listless. Each day he turned more wearily from *his old occupations, finding pleasure in nothing.*

Meantime Mr. Harper and his episode had well-nigh passed from Alice's mind ; she had other thoughts to occupy her. Love-making is an absorbing pastime, and though the old adage did not prove false in her regard, and the course of her and Captain L'Estrange's wooing was anything but a smooth one, still, for the time being, she was completely taken up by the complications of the worries and the delights of her engagement. Moreover, John's name was not nearly so often in Fitzhurst's mouth as formerly. The young man had grown tired of his literary mania. His fancy was now for the stage. He wished to appear as a patron of the drama, and developed a new-born enthusiasm for ladies and gentlemen connected with the theatre, especially the first-named. His hansom was often to be seen at the house of a well-known actress, and his visits to Nelson Square grew few and far between, until at last

they ceased. His friendship for John fared the fate of most incongruous friendships ; it languished, and finally died out from inanition. Nevertheless, as he was at heart a kind young fellow, it gave him a shock to hear one day accidentally that Mr. Harper was ill ; so ill that there was but little hope of his recovery.

Poor old Harper ! He had neglected him ; his conscience smote him, and the first thing next day he resolved to look him up. So he told himself, but next day brought other thoughts, other engagements. Poor old Harper should be looked up to-morrow—no, not to-morrow, for he should go to Richmond, but the day after ; and so it came to pass that it was nearly a week before the young lord, in his well-appointed hansom, drove up to 10, Nelson Square, to find the ominous black crape signal fluttering on the decayed knocker, and the battered, well-worn blinds drawn down.

"He asked many a time for you, my lord," said Mrs. Crean, wiping her dry eyes, from which no tear had emanated in the memory of Nelson Square ; "he liked you hawfully, the poor gentleman."

How he wished now he had come a little sooner, to have clasped the hand of the man whose life he had once saved. He was angry, and sorry, and pained, and annoyed altogether, and he turned wrathfully on Mrs. Crean. "Why didn't you send for me ?" he said, "and when is the funeral to be ? I shall come and see my old friend laid in his grave, at all events."

* * * * *

Fitzhurst came down to Debden after the funeral.

They were all a little sorry for John, especially Alice. A certain uneasiness mingled with her regret. She had meant so often to write to him and express more contrition than she had done in speaking, but she had put it off; it was awkward to re-open the subject; but now, while Fitzhurst talked, she listened attentively.

"Fancy," he said, "poor Harper had a love affair—the last man I should have suspected of such a thing, but all the same it is true. You see none of us escape," added the young fellow, caressing the soft moustache which was beginning to shade his upper lip.

"Mr. Harper's must have been an old story, I should think," Lady Fitzhurst remarked, yawning. She was a little tired of the subject, for her son was very full of it, and had talked incessantly about this queer eccentric, whose death after all was nothing to any one. He hadn't even a wife or child.

"Well, I don't know. The way I came to hear of it was—I noticed a little parcel in his coffin, and the doctor told me he had asked him one night to have it buried with him next his heart. 'It is,' said the poor old fellow, 'my greatest treasure;' and what do you think it was? The doctor told me. A little salmon-coloured envelope, with a monogram in gold. Eh! what's the matter with Al——" for Alice was sobbing as if her very heart would break.

"Poor, dear, old Jumbo!" she said, and sobbed again.

"Gracious goodness! I think you are all mad," her mother interrupted, "making such a ridiculous fuss over 'that queer Mr. Harper.'"

WANTED—A SON-IN-LAW.

THE ADVERTISEMENT.

“**M**ARY,” said Captain Hariot, in a very solemn manner, to his daughter, “how old are you?”

“For shame, papa!” exclaimed she. “I really believe you are anxious to obtain information for the man who takes the census.”

“I ought to know your age,” said he, slowly, as if he were trying to recall something from the buried past.

“Of course you should,” said Mary, laughing.

“And I think you’re twenty-two,” suggested he.

“Well, call it twenty-two,” said Mary. “What then?”

“Then,” said the captain, in his most solemn manner, “it’s full time that you were married.”

“Oh, pshaw!” said Mary. “Is that all?”

“I’ll turn it over in my mind,” said the captain, “and see what should be done about it.”

Captain Hariot was a widower, and Mary was his

only child. They lived in a charming little cottage, which was situated in the outskirts of Northfield. Captain Hariot had commanded for many years one of the great ocean steamers which ply between New York and Liverpool ; but, having amassed a moderately-sized fortune, he had retired from business, and had located himself, with his daughter, in the cottage already mentioned. The captain was a tall, spare, lantern-jawed man, whose eyes, deep-sunken in his head, gave a rather stern expression to his face. He had a habit, the result of many years' practice, of using a tone of command even at home ; but, as a general rule, Mary gave the real orders in the cottage. However, the captain occasionally "put his foot down," as he expressed it, and then everybody, even Mary, knew that he must be obeyed.

Mary Hariot was a charming young girl, with a graceful, rounded form of medium height. Her hair was of a chestnut hue, and her eyes were of that dark-blue colour which often accompanies chestnut hair ; her features were daintily cut, and were always beaming with intelligence ; her lips would have tempted a hermit ; and her easy charming ways, which, however, never seemed undignified, were the delight of all that knew her. She was a fresh, beautiful, dainty girl of twenty-two years of age, and heart-whole. Captain Hariot's cogitations were rather brief. He did not, it is true, solve the conundrum—How should his daughter obtain a husband ?—in the expeditious way in which, in former days, he was accustomed to deter-

mine the position of his vessel ; but on the following morning he remarked to Mary,—

“ I’ve turned that over in my mind.”

“ Turned what over ? ” said Mary, thoroughly non-plussed. She had entirely forgotten the conversation of the preceding day.

“ Yes,” responded the captain ; “ we’ll advertise.”

“ Advertise ! ” ejaculated Mary. “ What do you mean to advertise for ? ”

“ We’ll advertise for a son-in-law,” replied the captain, with the utmost coolness.

“ Papa ! ” cried Mary, “ you don’t mean that ! ”

“ I do mean it,” said the captain, very seriously. “ When we want a horse, we advertise ; when we want furniture, we advertise ; when we want a servant, we advertise ; when we want anything, we advertise. Well, we want a son-in-law——”

“ But we don’t, papa,” interrupted Mary.

“ I do, then,” said the captain. “ The thought that my daughter should have reached the mature age of twenty-two, and should still be unmarried, is startling. I want a son-in-law, and I’ll advertise for one.”

“ It’s a shame, papa ! ” said Mary.

“ That’s what I say,” promptly responded the captain. “ It’s a shame that you should still be single. Now I’ll prepare an advertisement, and then you can take it to your friend, the editor of the *Clarion*, and arrange with him to put it in a conspicuous part of his paper.”

“ Oh, I can’t do that ! ” exclaimed Mary.

"Then I'll do it," said the captain, firmly.

"Oh," said Mary, with a decidedly lugubrious expression upon her face.

Suddenly a new idea struck her, and her countenance brightened up at once.

"Well," said she, "give me the advertisement. If I must be put up at auction, I'd prefer to select the spot myself on which I am to be sacrificed."

"That's reasonable," said the captain. "If it is put in a passably prominent part of the paper I shall be satisfied."

On the following day Captain Hariot handed to Mary a piece of paper, on which he had written the following:—

"Wanted—a Son-in-Law. A gentleman, who has retired from business, desires to obtain a son-in-law. The advertiser's only child is a young lady with agreeable features and manners. She has been well educated, and possesses the usual accomplishments. She is kind and gentle, and never practises the scales on the piano. The gentleman who applies for the position of son-in-law to the advertiser must come well recommended, must be of good family, must be well educated, must be at least twenty-five years of age and not more than thirty, must be of medium height and passably good-looking, must be good-tempered and polite, and must be financially capable of caring for a family."

"There, Mary," said the captain, "I think that covers the ground."

"What ground?" asked Mary, as she took the paper in her hand.

"The kind of son-in-law I think we should advertise for."

"Oh!" said Mary, as she rapidly perused the paper.

Mary Hariot read, with open-eyed astonishment, the document which her father had prepared. As she finished it her hand dropped to her side, while her face grew rosy with blushes.

"Well?" said the captain.

"Oh, papa!" gasped Mary, "that is frightful! I never, never could put that in the newspaper."

"Pshaw!" said the captain. "We certainly have not unreasonably praised our wares, and I'm sure we have not been exacting in our requirements."

"But, papa, such a thing was never heard of. No girl was ever put up in that way, unless it was in some barbarous land."

"It's a very intelligent way, and if there is any place where they do it, you can be sure it isn't a barbarous land."

"Well, I could never put such a thing about me in the newspaper."

"Very well," said the captain, quite complacently; "give it to me. I'll go down to the office of the *Clarion* and give it to the editor myself."

"Will you really, papa?" asked Mary, eagerly.

"Undoubtedly," answered the captain, firmly; "I believe in advertising."

"Oh, then," said Mary, while the hot blushes suffused her cheeks, "I'll take it down to the office of the *Clarion* myself."

"Very well," said the captain, calmly; "I shall be quite satisfied."

Mary Hariot went to her room and put on her hat; then, with the paper on which her father had written the advertisement in her hand, she walked slowly to the office of the *Clarion*.

II.

THE ADVERTISEMENT IS PUBLISHED.

MARY HARIOT walked out of the house with the piece of paper which had been given to her by her father in her hand. She walked slowly down the street until she came to a shop, over which hung a sign on which was painted "The *Clarion*." She paused a moment, but finally passed the shop and entered the garden of the adjoining house, and, walking slowly up the front steps, reached the door and rang the bell.

The servant who opened the door evidently was well acquainted with the visitor, for she ushered Mary Hariot at once into a cosy little sitting-room. There was only one person—a lady, apparently about thirty years of age—in the room when Mary entered. The lady looked up from the sewing with which she was engaged, and, with a smile, exclaimed,—

"Oh, I'm delighted to see you, Mary! Sit down here. I've a thousand things to tell you."

Mary dropped into the chair which was nearest to her, and appeared to be a perfect realization of dolefulness.

The hostess, who was a plump, round-faced, black-eyed, handsome little woman, evidently brimful of merriment, looked at her visitor in surprise.

"Why, what's the matter?" she exclaimed.

"Everything's the matter, Mrs. Edwards!" said Mary. "This is a wretched, miserable world!"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Edwards; "since when?"

"Ever since father has taken it into his head to act so unreasonably."

Mrs. Edwards rose, went over to Mary Hariot, lifted that young lady to her feet, led her to a sofa, placed her there, and then sat down beside her.

"There," said she; "now, Mary, tell me all about it."

"Well, it's dreadful," said Mary. "Don't you think so?"

"Oh, frightful, dear! What is it?"

"Well, papa is going to advertise for—for a son-in-law."

"What?" ejaculated Mrs. Edwards, who could scarcely believe her own ears.

"Papa thinks it's the proper thing to advertise for a son-in-law."

For a moment surprise swept over Mrs. Edwards' face; but then her lips opened and she fairly roared with laughter. She tried again and again to stop, but as soon as the idea came back to her she would fall back into a laughing fit.

"Oh," said Mary Hariot, "of course it's funny to you; but to me——"

"My dear Mary," interrupted Mrs. Edwards; but then she became again afflicted with a desire to laugh so strong that she yielded to it. Finally, by pressing her hands against her sides, she succeeded in somewhat repressing her laughter, and continued her remarks.

"The truth is, Mary," she said, "the thing is funny. You'd laugh yourself if any other girl were in your place. Advertise for a son-in-law! Was such a thing ever heard of?"

Mrs. Edwards laughed again, but, on this occasion, not quite so vigorously as before.

"I don't believe," responded Mary, dolefully, "that such a thing was ever heard of before."

"Oh, well," said Mrs. Edwards, "he was only joking. He will not carry out the threat."

"There's the advertisement, written out by himself," said Mary, holding out the paper.

Mrs. Edwards took the piece of paper and read it.

"Well!" exclaimed she, "he's somewhat exacting in his requirements. But how did this paper come into your possession?"

"He said he would take it down to your husband's paper, the *Clarion*, and put it in."

"Well, I would have let him do it, if he dared."

"No; I said that if I was to be offered up I'd select the spot myself."

"Do you mean to put it in the paper?" asked Mrs. Edwards, in surprise.

"I must. If I don't, he will."

"Oh," said Mrs. Edwards.

"But," added Mary, in a hesitating way, "I think I can arrange it, if you will help me——"

"Of course I will," interrupted Mrs. Edwards.

"Can't you get your husband to strike off *one* copy of the paper with that advertisement in it? I'll give that copy to father, and that will satisfy him."

"I think so," said Mrs. Edwards. "Come and see."

They left the house and entered the adjoining building, in which was the office of the *Clarion*. They there found Mr. Edwards, the proprietor and editor of the paper. To him they put the question which Mary had asked Mrs. Edwards. When the whole matter had been explained to him, he laughed heartily at Mary for a few moments, and then informed her that there was only one objection to complying with her request.

"The paper is not stereotyped," said Mr. Edwards, "and so the thing is possible; but, as there will be no answers to your father's advertisement, the character of my paper, as an advertising medium, may be ruined."

"Oh, please, Mr. Edwards!" urged Mary.

"Bother!" exclaimed Mrs. Edwards. "If that's all the trouble, John, you will do what Mary asks."

Of course the editor then yielded.

As Mary, with an exultant air, left the editor's office, Mrs. Edwards halted long enough to whisper in her husband's ear,—

"Print *two* copies with that advertisement in."

On the following day the *Clarion* for that week duly appeared. Captain Hariot and his daughter were to-

gether when the carrier brought the captain's copy of the paper. It was with nervous anxiety that Mary watched her father run through the paper. She feared that some accident might have happened. It was a great relief to her to hear him utter the words—

“Ah, here it is!”

Then he eagerly perused the advertisement.

“Now, Mary,” said he, as he placed the paper on a table, “you are regularly on the market. I don't see why matrimony should not be put on the same basis as any other business. We'll see now how many bidders there'll be for the position of son-in-law.”

Mary said nothing, but, when her father left the room, she seized that paper and put it in a place where no one except her father and herself could find it.

Meanwhile, as soon as that edition of the *Clarion* had been printed, Mrs. Edwards obtained possession of the second copy which contained Captain Hariot's advertisement, and, having carefully marked the advertisement, she mailed the paper to her brother, Neil Stanton, who resided in New York City, and, at the same time, sent him a letter, of which the following is a copy:—

“MY DEAR NEIL,—When you last visited me, I understood that you were very much in love with my friend Mary Hariot; in fact, you said that you would have proposed if the condition of your business had not frightened you. It may be that your business has not picked up, but I advise you, if you ever wish to marry Mary, to come right on here and propose to her. You

will see by the advertisement in the *Clarion* which I have marked that Mary is in the market, and she is nice enough and handsome enough to attract wooers who are more speedy than you.

“Yours affectionately,

“MARIA.

“P.S.—Don’t let any one—not even Mary—know that I sent you the paper.—M.”

III.

THE ADVERTISEMENT IS ANSWERED.

NEIL STANTON was the junior member of the firm of Johnson and Co., dealers in hardware and cutlery, which had its office in Reade Street, near Broadway, in New York. The letter from his sister was delivered early in the morning, and Neil found it on his desk when he entered his office. He picked it up at once, and stood there at his desk and read it.

He read his sister’s letter hurriedly, and an expression of astonishment came upon his face as he read. As soon as he had finished it, he searched among the letters on his desk for a copy of the *Clarion*, which his sister had forwarded to him, and, having found it, he hastily tore off the wrapper, and ran his eye down its columns until he came to the advertisement which his sister had marked. That he read eagerly and repeatedly, until there came a sort of flash in his eyes and almost a blush upon his cheek.

To him there was not a particle of humour in that advertisement. He supposed that every copy of that edition of the *Clarion* contained it, and therefore it seemed to him a belittling of the woman he loved. He folded the paper up carefully, and, turning to one of the clerks, said,—

“Brown, will you see how soon I can leave by the Erie road for Northfield?”

While the clerk was obtaining the information, Neil finished folding the paper, and then put it in his breast pocket. Then Brown informed him that a train left in fifteen minutes.

“Say to Mr. Johnson,” said Neil to the clerk, “that I have gone to Northfield. If I am needed here he can telegraph me.”

Northfield is not very far from New York, but to Neil the ride seemed a very long one. However, he finally reached his destination, and he hurried at once from the depot to his sister's house.

“Why, Neil!” exclaimed Mrs. Edwards, “what a surprise!”

“Didn't you suppose your letter and that—that thing in the paper would bring me?” asked Neil, somewhat bitterly.

“Well, yes,” said Mrs. Edwards, with a smile; “I did think so.”

“I should have thought,” said Neil, sternly, “that Edwards would have had more sense and more regard for my feelings than to put such a thing in his paper.”

“Oh,” said Mrs. Edwards, aroused at once to the

defence of her husband, "I guess John has as much sense as other people."

"What did he mean by publishing such a shameful thing?"

"You'd better ask those who prepared it and put it in the paper," responded Mrs. Edwards, with a toss of her head.

"So I will," said Neil, as he put his hat on his head again.

"You might apply for the position," said Mrs. Edwards, with a sort of hysterical laugh, "before some one else does."

Neil had turned around to leave the room; but, as his sister made that remark, he faced her again, and, having looked at her steadily for a moment, he said,—

"I thank you for that suggestion. I will apply for the position."

Without another word Neil stalked hastily out of the house. For a moment his sister was dumfounded, but then she recovered her senses, and hastened after her brother. She was too late, however, for he had turned the corner.

"What a fool I've been!" ejaculated Mrs. Edwards.

Now, Mrs. Edwards had intended to explain to her brother all the circumstances connected with the advertisement, and to let him know that it had appeared in only two copies of the paper, one of which he held, and the other of which was in the possession of Mary Hariot, and to plan some way of making Captain Hariot pay for his ridiculous method of getting a son-in-law.

Unfortunately, Neil had immediately attacked her husband, and, as her temper was quite as warm as her brother's, Mrs. Edwards had sprung to the defence of her husband, without bearing in mind that her brother did not know anything about what had happened in the office of the *Clarion*.

Neil Stanton walked down the street with a quick, nervous stride. His face looked stern, and set, and hard. He really loved Mary Hariot, and had loved her for a long time. He had not, in so many words, proposed to her; but he thought that she understood that he loved her and would ask for her hand, and he certainly had flattered himself that she cared somewhat for him. This putting up the hand of the woman he loved for public competition seemed to him not only to soil and degrade her, but to insult him, and to make sport of his love. He could not believe that the thing had been done without the knowledge and consent of Mary, and although he still loved her he felt that she had made light of his love.

Neil was not, therefore, in a very pleasant frame of mind when he entered Captain Hariot's house. He was ushered into the sitting-room where Mary Hariot was. She sprang from her chair at once, and with a blush on her face and a smile on her lips advanced towards him.

"Why, Neil," she exclaimed, "how unexpected!"

She had learned to call him Neil at his sister's house. Neil's features did not for one moment relax.

"Doubtless," said he, in a sarcastic way.

"What has happened?" asked Mary, in open-eyed astonishment.

She was not accustomed to such a reception from Neil, and she did not in the least understand his actions or words.

"We'll see what has happened," said he, sternly. "Is Captain Hariot at home?"

"Yes," answered Mary, slowly, still staring at him in astonishment.

"Can I see him?"

"Father?" she asked, as if she had scarcely understood him.

"Yes."

"I will call him," said she, slowly.

Then, while her face still showed the surprise which she felt, she moved slowly across the room and passed through the door.

Neil stood perfectly still where she had left him, and when Captain Hariot entered the room he found the young man standing there. The captain entered the room briskly, followed by Mary, who came in more slowly.

"How do you do, Mr. Stanton?" said Captain Hariot, as he advanced, holding out his hand.

He, of course, was well acquainted with Neil. Mary watched Neil eagerly, but the young man did not in the least unbend. He took the hand which the captain held out to him, but the act was done in a cold and formal way, and not with Neil's usual courtesy.

"Mary said you wanted to see me," remarked the captain.

"Yes," said Neil, sternly; "I called for that purpose."

"Ah," said the captain, cheerfully, "what can I do for you?"

"I want to apply for the position for a person to fill which you have advertised."

"What!" said Mary, while the colour flashed into her face and her heart sprang into her throat.

"I wish to apply for the situation for which you have advertised here for aspirants."

Neil pulled the paper from his pocket and held it towards Captain Hariot. Mary moved hastily towards him, seized the paper which he held in his hand, and glanced at the advertisement. Then she looked up at the top shelf of a bookcase, whose glass doors enabled her to see that her copy of the *Clarion* was still where she had put it. Her hand fell to her side, and the paper dropped to the floor, while she leaned against the table for support. Neil stooped down, picked up the paper, and once more held it out to the captain.

IV.

THE REFUSAL.

"WELL," said Captain Hariot, with a smile, "you're the first applicant."

Neil bowed gravely.

"I told you, Mary, that advertising was the thing.

Here, you see, the advertisement has been promptly answered."

Mary did not say a word. Her cheeks were burning with shame, for she believed now that, either through mistake or intentionally, Mr. Edwards, the editor, had put the advertisement in every copy of the *Clarion*. Certainly there was more than one copy which contained it. The thought that she was thus held up for ridicule filled her with horror.

"So," said the captain, turning again to Neil, "you apply for the position of my son-in-law?"

"Yes," said Neil, firmly, not for a moment allowing the hard, stern expression to pass from his countenance.

"I suppose you can comply with the terms of the advertisement?" asked the captain.

"I hope so," said Neil.

"We'll see," continued the captain. "You are of good family?"

"You know my people."

"Yes," said the captain. "You are well educated?"

"I'm a graduate of Harvard."

"I suppose," said the captain, "we must consider that your diploma settles that question. You are over twenty-five years of age?"

"Twenty-eight."

"Medium height?"

"Five feet nine."

"Passably good-looking—hum—well, we'll pass that," said the captain. "Good-tempered and polite—

hum—you don't look that now, but I have found you so heretofore. Financially capable of caring for a family?"

"My income," said Neil, "was three thousand dollars last year, and it is not diminishing."

"Well," said the captain, "you seem to fill the bill."

During all this questioning Neil had stood there erect and stern-looking. He did not like it in the least, but he had resolved that, if Mary Hariot wished to put her love on an advertising basis, he would meet her there. Of course, if he had not been angry, he would have seen that they could not go on on that basis. Mary had not uttered a single word. She had leaned against the table, with her eyes cast on the floor and hot blushes on her cheeks. When the captain had finished his list of interrogations he turned to Mary and said,—

"Mr. Stanton seems to come up to the standard we had fixed."

"*We*, father?"

"Well, that I had fixed. He suits me well enough. What do you say?"

"Nothing," said Mary, slowly.

"He's entitled to an answer," said the captain.

Mary raised her face and looked steadily at Neil. There were no tears in her eyes, but they looked as eyes do after long weeping.

"I am entitled to an answer," said Neil, without yielding one particle of his firmness.

"You?" said she, in a low tone.

"I," answered Neil, as she paused.

"You come here," continued she, "in answer to that advertisement?"

"Yes."

"And you ask my father to comply with its terms?"

"I do."

"You—you—never!"

Mary moved hastily towards the door.

"Mary!" exclaimed her father.

She half turned, as her hand fell on the door-knob, and uttered one word—

"Never!"

Then she left the room.

For a moment there was absolute silence in the room. The captain was the first to break it.

"Well, Mr. Stanton," said he, "you have had your answer."

"By no means," said Neil, as his face grew, if possible, more stern. "You advertised for a son-in-law?"

"Yes," answered the captain.

"And I possess all the qualities which you required?" Neil asked.

"Yes."

"Then I insist upon occupying the position."

"Insist?" said Captain Hariot, as he drew up his figure to its full height and looked sternly at the young man.

"I insist," said Neil, firmly.

"No one insists in this house," said the captain. "You have heard my daughter's answer, and now I quite concur in it."

"When you advertised," said Neil, "you incurred certain responsibilities. I mean to hold you to those, if there is any law in the land. Good-day, sir."

Neil bowed gravely, and then walked out of the room and out of the house.

"Well, I'm blown!" remarked the captain.

Neil walked back to his sister's house, walked into the house, walked to her sitting-room, and, almost mechanically, dropped on the sofa.

"What have you done?" asked Mrs. Edwards, as she sprang to her feet and approached her brother.

"Made a fool of myself," answered he, bitterly.

They were wonderfully unlike for brother and sister. She was small and dark, in which particulars she resembled her mother, while he had inherited his tall figure and light complexion from his father. Yet, when one looked at them carefully, it was very easy to see a strong family resemblance in their faces.

Mrs. Edwards sat down beside her brother.

"Tell me what you did."

"I answered the advertisement."

"Very well," said she; "what was the result?"

"I've offended both Mary and her father."

"I feared that!" exclaimed Mrs. Edwards.

"Why did they advertise then," asked he, bitterly, "if they intended to be offended by the people who answered?"

"Oh, I should have told you!" exclaimed Mrs. Edwards.

"Told me what?"

"They didn't advertise," answered she.

"Didn't——"

Neil paused in his speech, put his hand in his pocket, pulled out his copy of the *Clarion*, and pointed to the advertisement.

"If they didn't advertise," said he, "what do you call that?"

"Oh, I know," said Mrs. Edwards, "and I should have explained it if you had not made me so angry when you first arrived."

"But you sent me this paper," urged he.

"Yes, of course," said she, "I meant it for a joke, but that's always the way when you joke with serious people."

"A joke!" exclaimed he. "Did you put this in the paper?"

"Oh, no," said she, promptly.

"No," added he, "for the captain acknowledged it to be his."

"There it is," said Mrs. Edwards. "The captain insisted upon having it put in the paper, but we didn't put it in."

Neil looked first at the paper and then at his sister.

"Oh, of course it's there, and I'll explain the whole thing."

Thereupon Mrs. Edwards gave a full explanation to her brother of the manner in which the advertisement came to be in the copy of the paper which he held in his hand.

"So you see," said she, finally, "Mary did not know

WANTED—A SON-IN-LAW.

that there was any copy of the paper containing that advertisement in existence, except the one she had in her possession."

"I wish there had not been," said Neil.

"She must have been very much surprised," said Mrs. Edwards, "when you showed her your copy of the paper."

"Surprised!" said he, slowly. "She was insulted. I can understand it all now."

"Insulted!" said Mrs. Edwards.

"Can you not see, Maria, how humiliated she must have been? Can you not understand that, when she saw this paper in my hand, she supposed that every copy of the *Clarion* contained that advertisement?"

"I am so sorry," said Mrs. Edwards. "I'll go to her at once."

"No," said Neil, as he rose from the sofa; "I will go to her. It was I who offended and humiliated her, and I must go to her."

"I believe you are right," said Mrs. Edwards.

Neil at once left the house.

V.

MARY RELENTS.

WHILE she had been in Neil's presence Mary Hariot had managed to somewhat repress her emotion; but, as she left the room and moved to her own apartment, the tears filled her eyes. Once in her room, which was

a front one on the second floor, she looked out of the window until she saw Neil leave the house and walk down the street. Then she wiped the tears from her eyes and went downstairs.

At the hat-rack in the hall stood Captain Hariot. He had put his hat on his head, and was looking for his stoutest cane.

"Was such a thing ever heard of?" ejaculated the captain.

Having found the cane for which he was seeking, he struck the point of it sharply against the floor.

"His rights, indeed!" exclaimed the captain, as he shook his stick at an imaginary opponent.

Just then his eyes fell on Mary, who was descending the stairs.

"I'm going for my walk, Mary," said he.

"Insist in my house!" muttered the captain, as he went out of the door.

Mary walked into the sitting-room. Once there, she went straight to the bookcase, and from its top shelf she took down the copy of the *Clarion* which had been delivered to her father. Sitting down in a chair, she opened it and found the wretched advertisement which had been put in at her father's request. Unquestionably, then, she thought, the advertisement had, either by intention or mistake, been printed in the whole edition, for Neil Stanton had a copy of the *Clarion* which contained it. Although she was alone, her cheeks again burned at the idea of being put up to be bid for by the public. She felt that she must be

a laughing-stock throughout the community, and the humiliation which she experienced again brought tears to her eyes.

At that moment she heard the sound of the front door-bell, and before she could entirely recover from her emotion Neil Stanton was ushered into the room. Mary at once rose to her feet, and, speaking as firmly as she could, she said,—

“My father has gone out, Mr. Stanton.”

“I did not come to see your father on this occasion,” said he, speaking very gently.

“I hope,” said Mary, “that you will excuse me from two interviews to-day.”

“I beg of you not to go away,” said he, earnestly. “Pray hear me now. What I have to say should not, I think, be postponed.”

Mary stood still in her place and bowed her head, as if giving him permission to speak.

His appearance was very different now from what it had been on his former visit. He still stood before her with a manly bearing, but there was no defiance, no hardness, no cruel pride, now. His face had softened, and his eyes now looked at her very tenderly.

“If you wish to say anything,” said she, slowly, “I will listen to you, but I do not feel very strong.”

“Mary,” said he, with much tenderness, “I wish to apologise to you from the bottom of my heart for my conduct. I was mad, foolish—anything you please—when I saw the woman—saw you put up thus in the public prints for the highest bidder.”

When he began to speak Mary's eyes lighted up, and a smile of pleasure came upon her face ; but when he referred to the advertisement her eyes dropped upon the paper, and her expression quickly changed to a sorrowful one.

"Can you pardon me?" asked he, eagerly and earnestly.

"I'm afraid," said she, slowly, "that we are the ones to blame. You had a right to act as you did, I suppose."

"It was not a question of right," said he, still speaking very earnestly. "Right had nothing to do with the matter. When I saw that thing in the paper I was wounded, humiliated, to think that the woman—I loved you, Mary, and could not bear to see such a thing done."

As he made his confession Mary looked up at him suddenly with a somewhat startled look ; but his eyes were flaming too fiercely for her, and her eyes again fell to the ground. He had moved close to her, and now he took her hand in his.

"Mary," he said, speaking very quickly, "will you be my wife?"

A flash of pleasure crossed Mary's face, but she did not look up. In answer to his query, however, she slowly and sadly shook her head.

"Mary," said he, "do you not love me?"

She looked at him pleadingly, as if begging him not to insist upon an answer.

He construed her actions properly, however, and asked quickly,—

"What stands between us, then?"

"This," said Mary, as she slowly held up the copy of the *Clarion*, which had remained in her hand.

"That?" ejaculated he, in surprise.

"Yes," said she. "Can I decently give to a man the humiliation of being reminded of the fact that his wife had advertised in the public prints for a husband? It is humiliation enough for me to endure that reproach, without compelling you to bear it."

"Oh!" said Neil, with a real sigh of relief.

"And yet," said Mary, more to herself than to him, "I didn't know——"

Neil still held her hand in his, and he at once placed his unoccupied hand lightly on her waist. In her excitement she did not notice that. As he was sure that he knew what she was about to say, he did not hesitate about interrupting her.

"Is that the only reason, Mary?" he asked.

"That is not kind," answered she.

"Mary," said he, "I do not care a pin for all the humiliation or reproach that may come from that advertisement."

His arm was slightly tightening around her waist.

"I am very sorry for what I said and did this morning," continued he.

"Oh, Neil!" murmured she.

His arm kept moving slowly round her waist.

"I have loved you a long while; I love you very dearly now. I beg you to be my wife. Now look me in the eyes, darling, and answer me from your heart."

His arm had tightened around her waist, and he

pressed her to his bosom in a way that seemed to be taking an unfair advantage of her under the circumstances. However, she apparently made no objections, and, though she uttered no words, either her face or her eyes answered his questions satisfactorily, for he bent his head and kissed her on the lips.

"My little darling," said he, as he released her partly from his clasp, "you have made me very happy."

"But I fear——" said she, as she looked at the newspaper.

"Fear nothing," said he. "Put on your bonnet, please, and let's go to Maria's."

"I don't know," said Mary, doubtfully.

"Oh, Maria wishes it," said he, "and I beg you to do so. Bring the newspaper too."

In a few moments the happy pair were at the house of Mrs. Edwards.

That lady was shrewd enough to take in the situation at a glance, and she gushed over Mary heartily.

"I asked Neil to bring you here," said Mrs. Edwards, "because I wished to explain that there are only two copies of that advertisement in existence. You have one and Neil has the other."

"Oh," said Mary, "I am so glad!"

"Neil and you," said Mrs. Edwards, "were both foolish enough to jump to the conclusion that it had appeared in every copy of the paper."

"I learned the truth," said Neil, "after I had returned from my first visit to your house."

"Oh," said Mary, "now I understand."

"So," said Mrs. Edwards, "take those two papers into the kitchen and burn them in the range."

Mary and Neil readily followed the directions given by Mrs. Edwards, and in a few minutes the two important newspapers had vanished into flame and smoke.

"And now," said Mary, "let's go back to the house and tell father."

VI.

THE CAPTAIN PUTS HIS FOOT DOWN.

WHEN a man wishes to put away an idea which irritates he should never go out of doors and walk without a companion. The result of such a performance invariably is that the man keeps turning the matter over in his mind, and in that way his irritation is increased rather than diminished.

That is precisely what happened to Captain Hariot. He reviewed the conduct of Neil Stanton again and again during his walk, and finally succeeded in convincing himself that the young man had done him a great injury.

He had hardly entered the house when Neil and Mary appeared, with faces wreathed with smiles.

"Oh, father!" exclaimed Mary, "I am so glad that you are home. Neil has something to say to you."

Mary blushed, but she did not seem to be at all abashed.

"Hum!" said the captain, "I thought we had given this gentleman his answer when he was here before?"

"It wasn't satisfactory, Captain Hariot," said Neil, with a smile, "and I would like to apply again, in hopes that I may receive a more honourable response."

"After your rights again?" said the captain, sarcastically. "Very well, sir; on reflection, I have concluded that you do not come up to the requirements called for by my advertisement."

"Why, father?" exclaimed Mary.

"I hope, Captain Hariot, that you will not find me lacking in too many qualities," said Neil, pleasantly.

"Oh, if you insist on your rights," said the captain, putting a curious emphasis on the word "insist," "we will try you by the advertisement."

"But, father——" said Mary.

"The truth is, Captain Hariot," said Neil, "that Mary has consented to be my wife, if you will give us your permission."

"You applied for the position of son-in-law in accordance with my advertisement," said the captain, sternly, "and we'll judge you by that. Mary, bring me the paper."

"I destroyed it, father," said Mary.

"Very well," said the captain, "I'll step next door and borrow Judge Smith's copy."

The captain left the room. Neil and Mary stood there, looking at each other in astonishment.

"What does it mean?" asked Mary, in a low tone.

"I don't know," said Neil, "unless I have offended your father in some way."

"But, Neil," said Mary, "if he should——"

"Don't fear, my darling," interrupted Neil. "I came very near losing you once through pride, and I don't mean to let my temper get the better of me again."

"He is my father, you know," said Mary.

"I'll bear that in mind, never fear."

At that moment the captain returned with the paper in his hand.

"Now," said he, as he unfolded the paper, "we'll judge you by the advertisement under which you have applied."

Then the captain diligently looked through the paper, but, to his intense astonishment, he could not find the advertisement. He hastily turned the paper and looked at its date. The date was the correct one, but still he could not find the advertisement.

"Mary," said he, "will you find that advertisement for me?"

"I can't, father," said Mary, smiling in spite of the seriousness of the situation.

"Can't!" ejaculated he.

"It isn't there."

"But I saw it in our copy," said her father.

"That was a special copy, father," said Mary; "and there isn't a copy of that advertisement in existence now."

"It didn't appear in the whole issue, then?" asked the captain, astonished.

"No," said Mary.

"But he had a copy too," said the captain, pointing to Neil.

"There were *two* copies," said Neil; "but I destroyed mine when your daughter destroyed yours.

"The truth is, Captain Hariot," said Neil, who was determined to drive away the captain's ill-humour, "that I do not apply for any position under that advertisement."

"There isn't any advertisement," said the captain, "and so you haven't any rights——"

"None at all," said Neil.

"To insist on," added the captain, sternly.

"I insist on nothing," responded Neil.

"Oh, you have changed your tune since your last visit."

Mary looked nervously anxious as she heard her father's words, and it was a beseeching glance which she cast on Neil.

"The truth is, Captain Hariot, that I thought the woman I loved had been humiliated, and I thought she had humiliated me, and I allowed my temper to get the better of me. Mary has pardoned me, and I hope you will, also."

"Oh, you are not insisting on any rights, then?" said the captain.

"No, indeed," said Neil, laughing.

The smile which Mary gave him quite compensated her lover for keeping his temper on this occasion.

"Very well; then let us hear what you have to say," said the captain, in quite a magisterial manner.

"Mary," said Neil, as he took her hand, "is willing to admit that she loves me."

"A sudden attack, isn't it?" asked the captain.

"Oh, ever so long!" exclaimed she; then, remembering herself, she added, "I mean—that is——"

"Ever so long is right," said Neil.

"And you?" said the captain, turning round and addressing Neil.

"Oh, I've loved her ever so long too!" exclaimed Neil.

"Well," said the captain, "as you don't apply under the advertisement——"

"Oh, dear, no!" interrupted Neil and Mary together.

"And as you do not insist on any rights——"

"I ask a great favour," said Neil.

"Why, then, I don't see any objection, if Mary wishes it."

"Oh, father!" was all Mary could say before Neil clasped her in his arms and kissed her.

"All the same," said the captain, as he moved out of the room, "this proves conclusively that there's nothing like advertising for anything you want. I advertised for a son-in-law, and now I am provided with one. The advertisement had a somewhat limited circulation, but then it went to the right place, and that's all it could have done if the circulation had been immense."

In due time Neil and Mary were married, and it would be a difficult thing for the most astute reasoner to prove that Captain Hariot did not obtain the new member of his family by putting in the *Clarion* that advertisement headed, "Wanted—a Son-in-Law."

THE SISTERS.

THERE lies in the north of England a considerable tract of land, now known by the name of the Waste Lands, which once formed the richest property of two wealthy families by whom untoward circumstances had caused it to be deserted. For some time it was looked after by stewards, too much bent upon profiting themselves to regard the interests of their employers. The tenantry, who, drained of their hard earnings, were obliged to vex the land till it become a bed of stones, dropped off one by one. The hedge-rows, being unremittingly assisted in the progress of decay by the paupers of the neighbourhood, were soon reduced to nothing but dock-weeds and brambles, which gradually uniting from the opposite ends of the fields, the property became a huge thicket, too encumbered ever to be worth clearing, and only valuable to poachers and gipsies, to whom it still affords abundant booty and a secure hiding-place.

The two mansions have kept pace in ruin with the lands around them. The persons left in charge of them, being subject to no supervision, put themselves but little out of their way to preserve that which was

so lightly regarded by the owners. Too careless to repair the dilapidations of time and the weather, they were driven, by broken windows and rickety doors, from office to office and from parlour to parlour, till ruin fairly pursued them into the grand saloon ; where the Turkey carpets were tattered by hob-nails, and the dogs of the chase licked their paws upon sofas of silk and satin. In due time the rain forced its way through the roofs, and the occupiers having no orders to stop it with a tile, the breach became wider and wider. Soon the fine papering began to show discoloured patches, and display the lath and plaster which bulged through it ; then the nails which supported the family portraits gave way with their burthens ; and finally the rafters began to yield, and the inhabitants wisely vacated the premises in time to avoid the last crash, rightly conjecturing that it was useless to leave the movables behind to share in the common destruction, when there was so little likelihood of their ever being inquired after.

Thus ended the pride both of Heroncliff and Hazledell, which may still be seen, from each other, about a mile apart, shooting up a few parti-coloured walls from their untrimmed wildernesses, and seeming, like two desperate combatants, to stand to the last extremity ; neither of them cheered by a sign of life, excepting the jackdaws which sit perched upon the dead tips of the old ash trees, and the starlings that sweep around at sunset in circles, beyond which the country folks have rarely been hardy enough to intrude.

The last possessor who resided at Hazledell was an eccentric old bachelor, with a disposition so composed of kindness and petulance, that everybody liked, and scarcely any one could live with him. His relations had been driven away from him, one after the other—one because he presumed to plead the poverty of a tenant whom the old man had previously resolved upon forgiving his rent; another, because he mistook the choice bin of the cellar when wine was prescribed for the sickness of the poor; and a third, because he suffered himself to be convinced by him in politics, and thus deprived him of the opportunity of holding forth arguments which gave his company due time to discuss their good cheer. There was but one person who understood him, and this was his nephew, who continued to the last his only companion, and kept him alive solely by knowing how to manage him. He had the good taste never to remind him of his years by approaching him with that awe which is commonly demonstrated by young people towards the old, and the tact to observe exactly where his foibles would bear raillery, and where they required sympathy. He could lead him from one mood to another, so that the longest day in his company never seemed monotonous; or if he rambled away amongst the neighbourhood, he could return at night with a tale of adventures which sent him to bed without repining at the prospect of to-morrow. Unluckily the old man considered him too necessary to his comfort to part with him; and though merely the son of a younger brother, without fortune

or expectations, he was not permitted to turn his mind to a profession, or to anything beyond the present. The youth, however, was scarcely twenty-three; and at such an age a well-supplied purse for the time being leaves but little anxiety for the future. With a good education, picked up as he could by snatches, a sprightly disposition, and a talent equal to anything, young Vibert of Hazledell was as welcome abroad as he was at home; and it was augured that his handsome figure and countenance would stand him in the stead of the best profession going. The young ladies would turn from any beau at the county ball to greet his arrival, and never think of engaging themselves to dance till they were quite sure that he was disposed of. One remarked upon the blackness of his hair, another upon the whiteness of his forehead; and the squires who were not jealous of him would entertain them with his feats of horsemanship and adroitness at bringing down, right and left. Still Vibert was not spoiled; and the young ladies pulled up their kid gloves till they split, without making any visible impression upon him. His obstinacy was quite incomprehensible. Each ridiculed the disappointment of her friend, in the hope of concealing her own; and all turned for consolation to the young master of Heroncliff.

Marcus of Heroncliff was nearly of an age with Vibert, and was perhaps still more popular with the heads of families, if not with the younger branches, for he had the advantage of an ample fortune. His person, also, was well formed, and his features were,

for the most part, handsome ; but the first had none of the grace of Vibert, and the last had a far different expression. His front, instead of being cast in that fine expansive mould, was contracted and low, and denoted more cunning than talent. His eye was too deeply sunk to indicate openness or generosity ; and the *tout ensemble* gave an idea of sulkiness and double-dealing. It was held by many that this outward appearance was not a fair index of his disposition, which was said to be liberal and good-natured. The only fault which they found with him was that his conversation seemed over-much guarded for one of his age. He appeared unwilling to show himself as he really was, and the greatest confidence which could be reposed in him produced no corresponding return. He walked in society like one who came to look on rather than to mix in it ; and although his dependants lived in profusion, his table was rarely enlivened save by the dogs which had been the companions of his sport.

Vibert, whose character it was to judge always favourably, believed that his manner and mode of life proceeded from the consciousness of a faulty education, and a mistrust of his capacity to redeem lost time. He felt a friendliness for him, bordering upon compassion ; and their near neighbourhood affording him frequent opportunities of throwing himself in his way, a considerable degree of intimacy was, in course of time, established between them. Vibert was right, as far as he went, in his estimate of his friend's mind ; but he never detected its grand feature. Marcus was

sensible that he was below par amongst those of his rank, and a proud heart made him bitterly jealous of all who had the advantage of him. It was this that gave verity to the expression which we have before noticed in his features, made him a torment to himself, and rendered him incapable of sympathising with others. If a word were addressed to him, he believed that it was designed to afford an opportunity of ridiculing his reply; if contradiction was opposed to him, his visage blackened as though he felt that he had been insulted. Vibert, so open to examination, was the only person whom he did not suspect and dread. They hunted, shot, and went into society together; and it was observed that Marcus lost nothing by the contact. His confidence increased, his reserve in some degree disappeared, and Vibert secretly congratulated himself on having fashioned a battery to receive the flattering attentions from which he was anxious to escape. His ambition, indeed, was otherwise directed.

At a few miles' distance from Hazledell was a pretty estate, called Silvermere, from a small lake, which reflected the front of the dwelling and the high grounds and rich timber behind it. It was inhabited by persons of consideration in the county, who were too happy at home to mix much with their neighbours. In fact, of a numerous family, there was but one daughter old enough to be introduced; and she was of a beauty so rare that there was little danger in keeping her upon hand until her sister was of an age to accompany her into society.

In this family Vibert had been for some time a favourite, and had been fascinated on his first introduction to it. The beauty of whom we have made mention, and her sister, a year or two younger, were placed on either side of him; and it was hard to know whether most to admire the wild tongue and laughing loveliness of the younger—the fair-haired Edith, or the retiring but smiling dignity of the black eyes and pale fine features of the elder—the graceful Marion. They were, perhaps, both pleased to see the hero of the county conversations, but the younger one was the foremost to display it: without being a flirt, she was frank, and had the rare natural gift of saying and doing what she pleased without danger of misconstruction.

The daring but feminine gaiety of this young creature speedily dispelled from the mind of Vibert all idea of his recent acquaintance. On his making some mention of it, she assured him that, on her part, the acquaintance was by no means recent, for she had heard him discussed as often as any Knight of the Round Table.

“To place you upon an equality with us,” she said, “I will tell you what sort of persons we are, and you can judge whether at any future time, when your horse happens to knock up in our neighbourhood, and your dinner to be five miles off, you will condescend to take advantage of us. Papa and mamma, who you see have been a handsome couple, and would think themselves so still if they had not such a well-grown family, are by

no means rigid, exacting, fault-finding, and disagreeable, like papas and mammas in general. They have had the good taste to discover our precocious talents, and profit by being our companions instead of our rulers, from the time we learned the art of spelling words of one syllable, and doing as we were not bidden. Instead of scolding us for our misdeeds, they used to reason with us as to their propriety, and generally got the worst of the argument; so, saving that in virtue of our old companionship we make them the confidants of most of our dilemmas, they have brought us up charmingly undutiful and self-willed.

“As for Marion, she is a young lady erroneously supposed to be the pride of the family, and who presumes to regard me with a patronising complacency which seems to intimate an idea that, one of these days, I shall really learn to talk. She is a sedate personage, who tries to reflect upon things; but as the same deep study has shaded her brow as long as I can recollect, I imagine that she does not often come to a conclusion. Yet the falsely-styled Pride of Silvermere does not blanch her cheeks in the unwholesome atmosphere of learned tomes, nor by spinning the globes, nor by hunting the stars. Her character is a little touched with romance, and her study is how to mend a bad world, which continues ailing in spite of her. She gives all her consolation, and half of her pin-money, to a tribe of old dames and young damsels, who, under such patronage, only pull our hedges in greater security, or add fresh colours to the costume

which is to flaunt triumphant on the fair day. The urchins whom she teaches 'to guess their lessons,' and buys off from aiding in the toils of their parents, are the most mischievous in the neighbourhood; and, in short, things go on worse and worse, and poor Marion does not know what to make of it. From the humbler world, so different from the Arcadian affair of her imagination, she turns with despair to the sphere in which she is herself to move, and shudders at the prospect of disappointment there also. Where amongst such a community of young ladies battling for precedence, and young gentlemen vowing eternal constancy to a dozen at a time, can she look for the friend of her soul, or the more favoured being who is to console her for the want of one? Alas, the Pride of Silvermere! with feelings so delicate that a gossamer might wound them, how can she accommodate herself to any world but that of the fairy tales which delighted our nursery, or expect tranquillity in any place but a cloister?"

Vibert's calls were repeated often, each one affording a pretext for another, and each visit growing longer than the last. The father of his two attractions was required frequently by his affairs in London, where he spent weeks at a time, and their mother was generally confined by delicate health to her chamber. Thus Vibert's intimacy with them had but little ceremony to restrain its rapid advancement; and he soon felt, what has perhaps been felt by many, that the simple smile of the dignified and retiring is more perilous than the brightest glance of wit and vivacity. Indeed, Edith

was too gay to be suspected of any thought beyond that of amusement ; but the actions of Marion were more measured, and her approbation was the more flattering. Vibert laughed when he encountered the first, but his pulse beat quicker at the sight of the last.

There seems in the affairs of the heart to be an unaccountable intelligence, by which, without the use of external signs, the tremors of the one generally find their reverberation in the other. Often as Vibert entered to share in the morning amusements of the sisters, to give an account of the horse that he was breaking in for Marion, or the dog he was teaching antics for Edith, it was impossible for him to be insensible to an increasing flush of satisfaction at his appearance, and by degrees he gave up all other society, and had no pastime to which Marion was not a party. Both young, both interested in the other's happiness, it was not likely that they should reflect how the brightest flowers may be the seat of poison, and the sweetest moments the parents of misery. Their intimacy became more confidential, and Edith left them more and more to themselves, to seek amusement elsewhere. Still there was no question of love. Vibert knew that without fortune or expectations he could have no pretension to Marion, and that the number of her young brothers and sisters must render it impossible for her father to remedy the deficiency. It was then that he felt the extent of the sacrifice he had made in devoting himself so entirely to his uncle. Had he

adopted any profession, he might have obtained a home of his own, to say the least; and, however humble that home might have been, would Marion have shrunk from it? Would Marion have failed to make it the richest spot upon earth? He was yet only of an age when many commence their career; his mind was too active and too brilliant to suffer his habits to become so fixed but that he could apply them to anything. He determined upon breaking the matter to his uncle; and, as Edith was now eighteen, and the sisters were just about to appear in public, there was no time to be lost. If Marion were not to go forth with a hand already engaged, what had he not to apprehend? Fortunes and honours would be at her feet—friends would reason, parents might command, and what had she to reply? She loved an idler who lived upon another's bounty, and whose future means were something worse than precarious! He seized upon what he thought a good opportunity the same evening. His uncle was enjoying his arm-chair and slippers beside an ample fire, to which the pattering of a November storm gave additional comfort.

"Vibert," said he, "what have been your adventures to-day?"

"I have been to Silvermere."

"Folks tell me you have been there every day for the last twelvemonth,—and who have you seen there?"

"I have seen Marion."

"Well, nephew, she is good-looking, you say, and

sensible, and all that. Why do not you marry her, and bring her home to make tea for us ? ”

“ Alas ! I would willingly do so, had I the means.”

“ We can get over that obstacle, I think, by doubling your allowance.”

“ My dear sir, you do not understand its full extent. Marion’s family would never consent, unless she were to be the mistress of an establishment of her own.”

“ We can remedy that, too, Vibert. Divide the house with me at the middle of the cellar, and brick up the communications. Divide the stables and the horses, have new wheels and new arms to the old family rumble-tumble, and make any farther arrangements you please. You have been a good boy, to bear with a crazy old man so long, and I should not like you to be a loser by it.”

“ My dear uncle, there was no need of this additional generosity to secure my gratitude and endeavours to prove it. I did not speak for the purpose of placing any farther tax upon you, but merely to consult you whether it were not better that I thought of some profession, by which I might attain a position in life not liable to reverse.”

“ A profession !—what, one that would call you away from Hazledell ? ”

“ I fear all professions would subject me to that affliction.”

The uncle’s colour rose, and his brow darkened.

“ Vibert leave me in my old age, when I have become entirely dependent upon him ! Vibert knock away the

only crutch that props me up from the grave—bequeath me to the mercy of hired servants, with not a soul to exchange a word of comfort with me ! What fortune could you obtain which would compensate for reflections like these ?

“Stay, nephew, and see me into my grave—the reverse which you apprehend. I never thought that you could so coldly contemplate my extinction ; but it is right and natural that you should do so. Only stay, —and I promise you that I will not keep you long,— I will curtail my expenses, banish my few old friends, dismiss my servants, and live upon bread and water, to save what I can for you from the estate. I cannot cause it to descend to you ; but, at all events, I can save for you as much as you would be likely to make by leaving me. Yet, if it be your wish to go, e'en go ; I had rather you would leave me miserable than stay to wish me dead.”

The old man had worked himself into a fit of childish agitation, and Vibert saw that argument was useless.

“Uncle,” he replied, with a look and voice of despair, “make yourself easy. Marion will find another husband, who will perhaps render her happier than I could, and I will remain with you as I have done hitherto.”

From this time Vibert spared no effort to overcome his ill-starred passion, as well for Marion's sake as for his own ; seeking every possible pretext to render his visits less frequent, and to pay them in company.

Marion perceived the change at the moment it took place, and, although she could not dispute its propriety, her sensibility was wounded to the quick. She commenced her first round of provincial gaiety with a fever at her heart, and an ominous presage of sorrow.

The appearance of the Silvermere party formed an epoch in the annals of the county; and, as Vibert had foreseen, there was not a squire of the smallest pretensions who did not address himself sedulously to make the agreeable to them. They had little encouragement, however, in their attempts, excepting from Edith. Her heart was free, and her tongue was full of joy; but Marion was looking for the return of Vibert, and the reserved glance of her eye kept flattery at a distance, and hope in fetters. Still he returned not—she never met him in society, but she constantly heard of his having been at balls and merry-makings where she was not. It was in the vain pursuit of his peace of mind, and she was too generous to attribute it to anything else. On his occasional visits of ceremony she received him as if nothing material had happened; but the flush was gone from her cheek, and the smile that remained was cold and sickly.

Meantime rumour was liberal in assigning to each of the sisters her share of intended husbands. Vibert listened to the catalogue with all the trepidation of a lover who had really entertained hopes. Alas! if that selfish principle of denying to another what we cannot enjoy ourselves be excusable in any case, it is so in

love. The loved object which belongs to no other still appears to be in some degree our own; and fancy conjures up in spite of us an indefinable trust in the future, of which the total destruction falls like the blow of an assassin. It was thus with Vibert, when, after writhing long in secret anguish at the mention of any name connected with that of Marion, report from all quarters concurred in the same uncontradicted tale. Marion was receiving the addresses of Marcus of Heroncliff—of him for whom he had himself, from motives of the purest kindness, secured the good thoughts of her family; him whom he had made the confidant of his love; him who had professed himself to be only waiting for encouragement to throw himself at the feet of her sister! That he should have met him daily, and never hinted at the change in his intentions! Yet might it not have been that he feared to inflict pain? That he should have deserted Edith when his conduct had implied all that was devoted! Yet, was it not for Marion? But then, that Marion should have become the rival of her sister! Yet, oh! how soon she had overcome the remembrance of him, and how natural was it for the cold in love to become the faithless in friendship. Thus Vibert went on arguing for and against all the parties, and winding up with a forced ejaculation of, “It is nothing to me; it is no affair of mine”—it was meant to confirm his pride, but only proved his wretchedness.

Upon this principle, and from a sense of his want of self-possession, the name of Marion never passed his

lips in the presence of Marcus, who, on his part, was equally silent.

The report upon which this conduct was adopted was not so destitute of reason as those which had preceded it. Marcus, with the failing already noticed, was incapable of being a true friend; and though at his first introduction at Silvermere the marked intelligence between Marion and Vibert reduced him to the necessity of devoting his attentions to Edith, yet the bare circumstance of her sister's preference for another was sufficient to kindle in his heart the most burning anxiety to obtain her for himself. Without considering Vibert's earlier acquaintance, he felt himself eclipsed, and his honour wounded. The moment, therefore, that his friend's visits were discontinued, his own were redoubled. They were naturally, from his previous behaviour, laid by the family to the account of Edith; and upon this conviction Marion often used him as a protection against the advances of her unwelcome host of admirers. If she was asked to dance, she was engaged to Marcus, and his arm was always ready to conduct her to her carriage. It was observed that she received much more of his attention than was bestowed upon her sister; and insensibly their manner in public became the practice in private, where there was no need for it. His hopes rose high, and he scrupled not to advance them by endeavouring to extirpate the last kind feeling which he thought might yet linger for poor Vibert. One while he affected chagrin, and invented excesses on the part of his friend

as the cause of it ; at another time he was incensed at injurious words, which he alleged to have been employed by Vibert towards herself. At last, when he thought himself quite secure, he disclosed his passion, and was rejected with astonishment.

The sting for one like him had a thousand barbs : he loved the beautiful Marion with all the energy of a soul which had never before loved a human being. Common report, and his confidence in her resentment against Vibert, had made him consider her as already his own. His triumph over all the competitors that he had feared, envied, and detested, was, as he deemed, on the eve of completion ; and now he was to be the object of derision and mock pity ! The means which he had used to ingratiate himself would probably be divulged. The inmost core of his heart would be exposed and scorned ; and Vibert, whom he felt to be the latent cause of his rejection, was perhaps finally to be reinstated, and to flaunt his triumph daily before his eyes ! The very evils which bad minds have attempted to inflict upon others become a provocation to themselves—they have been defeated, and therefore they have been injured ; and the rejected suitor returned home pallid, and quivering with an ague fit of mortal hate.

The attentions of Marcus had never been discussed between the sisters until the occurrence of this catastrophe. He left them in a shaded alley of the pleasure-grounds, which were beginning to be strewed with the yellow leaves of autumn ; and a clouded sunset cast a

few long streaks across the sward, and made the deep recesses look still more sombre.

There are few who do not feel a melancholy peculiar to this period of the year. Marion had a double reason, for it was about the same time in the preceding autumn, and in the summer-house but a few steps before her, that she had passed the last happy hour with Vibert.

"Marion," said Edith, as they walked on, with their arms fondly resting upon each other's neck, "you are not well. It is long since you were well; but I had hoped that the attachment of Marcus would have dispelled a deep grief, of which you forbade me ever to speak. I trusted that your heart had been arrested in its progress of sorrow, and I was silent, lest you should think me jealous of my sweet rival."

"Heavens! that my apathy should have been so great as to mistake his attentions. I only bore with him because I thought him yours."

"Marion, I love him not; and never should have wished him loved by you, had I not felt that your life depended on the diversion of your thoughts. I have been mistaken; you have been dying daily, and unless you would have me die with you, let me write to Vibert. Sweet Marion, let me write, as from myself, in my own wild way, merely to bid him come and dance on my birthday."

"No, Edith, no. He would suspect the reason; it is too humiliating. I have still pride enough left to save

me from contempt, if not to support me from—— Edith, let us talk of other things.”

She leaned her head upon her sister's bosom, and both were weeping, when they were startled by the gallop of a horse, and a ring at the garden gate. Edith saw that it was the servant of Vibert, and she sprang like a fawn to inquire his commission. He brought a letter for Marion, and thus it ran :—

“The relations who stood between me and the succession to the estates of Hazledell are dead. I am now my uncle's heir ; but, I fear, too late. The sorrow of withdrawing myself to my proper distance when I was poor is probably to be followed up by the anguish of being forbidden to return now that I am rich. I dare not appear before you till I hear the refutation of your reported engagement with Marcus—till you bid me look forward to a termination of the misery which a feeling of honour obliged me to inflict upon myself.”

Marion sank for support against the ivy-twined pillar of the summer-house. Edith kissed her pale cheek, and fondly whispered, “I told you so : what answer will you send ?” After the first moments of tremulous agitation—after an interval of silence, to lull the tumults of her heart, Marion merely ejaculated, “Poor Vibert ! I thought he had forgotten me !”

“Rather say, poor Edith,” replied her sister, with a burst of that natural gaiety which had of late almost forsaken her ; “poor Edith has now the willow-wreath all to herself. Alas, for some doughty champion to twine it round the neck of the false lord of Heroncliff !

'Tis time that I endow you with all my finery, and prepare for a nunnery."

With that she playfully took from her neck a simple hair-chain, the appendage to which had always been carefully hidden in her bosom, and cast it over the unadorned head of Marion. "Look!" she exclaimed, with increased archness, and gazing upon her averted eyes, to see if the smile had yet returned to them, "look what a jewel I bestow upon you! I have cherished it ever since we sat for our miniatures, and the artist amused himself between whiles with studying a head for Apollo. Why do you not look?"

Marion turned her eyes, and was surprised by her lover's likeness.

"Then Marion *can* smile? Oh, the joy to see it! I begged this little jewel for your wedding-present; but, in truth, this seems no bad opportunity, as the cavalier may now speak for himself. See what a sad brow—what an imploring eye. Here—here is a pencil, the servant waits for a reply."

Marion tore the back from her letter, and wrote, "The reports are unfounded—the future is in your power."

"Edith!" she said, when the messenger was dismissed; "give me your arm back to the house, for I feel faint. In the midst of all this happiness there is a sickness at my heart—a strange boding that I am only tantalized by chimeras, and meant for misfortune. Perhaps I deceive myself. Perhaps it is only the strange bewilderment occasioned by this revolution in all that interests me. I cannot help it."

The messenger, who had been dispatched by Vibert the moment he became aware of his happy fortune, did not return in time for him to profit ere the morrow by Marion's answer. It was a gusty and querulous night—the old trees by his window groaned as though they were in trouble, and the scud swept along the sky like a host of spectres. He felt low and oppressed, in spite of himself. His uncle had left him ominously distressed at the news which he had lately received. After having retired for the night, he had come back to shake hands with him again. The younger ones, he said, were dropping about him, and leaving him desolate, to lament the luckless humour which had impeded him from adding to their comforts, as he might have done. Every joint of him trembled lest he should live too long. "God bless you, Vibert," he added; "you have always been a good boy, and have borne kindly with my infirmities—God bless you! God bless you! Vibert, you will go to-morrow to Silvermere? I have long prevented you from being happy, and you owe me no thanks that you are so at last. Go to bed; you have grown thin from want of sleep, and it is all my fault."

He quitted him again with affectionate and almost childish reluctance; and Vibert paced his room, in a fever of anticipation, till the rising of the sun, which had seemed as if it never meant to rise again. It was still too early to set out for Silvermere, but he knew that Marcus rose with the dawn for his field-sports, and his generous mind was unwilling to lose an instant in

acknowledging and asking pardon for the suspicions which he had entertained of his friendship. He walked rapidly to Heroncliff, and found Marcus, as he had anticipated, up and dressed ; in fact, he had passed the night in the same manner as he himself had done, and his face looked haggard and wild.

"Marcus," said Vibert, "I come to tell you a piece of strange news."

"I know it already," replied Marcus, with an attempt to look glad. "I met your servant going to Silvermere with it. Your uncles in India are dead."

"I scarcely recollect them, and it would therefore be ridiculous to affect much grief for their loss ; but the circumstance has been the means of showing me an injustice committed against yourself, at which I am sincerely grieved. I believed that you entertained an intention of supplanting me in the love of Marion ; and although my reason had nothing to object to it, my heart felt that it was not the part which I would have acted towards you. I have accused you bitterly, but see, Marion has herself exculpated you ; and you must even forgive me as one who has been too unhappily bewildered to be master of himself."

Marcus took his offered hand, and laughed, but with a fearful expression, which he strove to hide by casting his eyes on the ground.

"Then Marion," he observed, "looks forward to being the lady of Hazledell ?"

"Ay, and to do the honours of it to her sister, the

lady of Heroncliff. My son shall marry your daughter, and we will join the estates in one."

Marcus drew in his breath with a harrowing sound.

"Vibert," he said, "we had best remain unmarried; we are more independent to pursue our pastimes; we are not obliged to receive the society which is odious to us; and whilst we are free we are the more welcomed abroad. Promise me you will think no more of it."

"You would not ask it, if you felt, like me, that you were beloved by Marion. What do I care for independence and my reception abroad, when I have such a thralldom and such a paradise at home!"

"You are determined, then?"

"Can you doubt it? I am even now on my way to Silvermerc. I should arrive too soon on horseback, and am therefore obliged to walk, for I cannot be easy until I find myself on my way thither. Come, take your gun, and accompany me."

"I will accompany, in the hope of dissuading you, and bringing you back before you arrive there."

"And I will drag you into fetters whether you will or not. Come; it is time to start, if we would be there by breakfast time. What ails you? You look pale and shivering this morning; and see,—for the first time in your life, you have forgotten your gun."

With that he kindly took it from where it stood, and presented it to him.

"I will not take it," said Marcus, vaguely; "I am nervous, and cannot shoot."

"Tut, man; take your gun, I say; a good shot will

put you in spirits. There is an outlying deer from Hazledell in the Black Valley, and you must kill him for our wedding-feast."

Marcus bit his white lips, and did as he was bidden ; and the companions set out upon their walk.

The weather was still gusty and uncertain. The faint gleam of the sun was rapidly traversed by the clouds, which seemed to overrun each other in wild and fearful confusion. Several large trees were blown across the pathways, and the crows skimmed aloft in unsettled course, as though they were afraid to perch."

"How I love this bracing air !" said Vibert. "I feel as if I could fly."

"You feel elastic from your errand. I have no such cause, and I would fain that the morning had been calmer. I think that long usage to blustering weather would have a strong effect upon men's passions, and render them too daring and reckless."

As they descended the brow of fern and scattered plantations from his bleak residence, his persuasions that Vibert would return became more and more urgent. He used, in a wild, disjointed manner, all the vain arguments to which the selfish and the dissipated generally resort to dissuade their friends from what they call a sacrifice of liberty. They were easily overruled, and his agitation grew the more violent. In this manner they arrived at the entrance of the Black Valley—a gorge of rock and varied earth, choked up by trees and bushes, chance-sown by the birds and the winds. This valley was between two and three miles

in length, its gloom was unbroken by a single habitation, and it had been the witness of many atrocities. It was a place usually avoided ; but it was the shortest road to Silvermere, and Vibert never visited it by any other.

"I do not like this valley !" said Marcus ; "we will take the upper road."

"It is too far about ; come on—you are not yourself this morning, and the sooner Edith laughs at you the better."

They were making a short cut through the tangled thicket from one path to another, and had reached a more gloomy and savage spot than they had hitherto encountered. Marcus sat down upon a piece of splintered timber, and motioned Vibert, with a gasping earnestness which was not to be disputed, to seat himself beside him.

"Marcus," said the latter as he complied, "your conduct is inexplicable. Why are you so anxious that I should not go to Silvermere, nor renew my acquaintance with Marion ? You must have some reason for all this ; and, if so, why conceal it from me."

"If nothing short of such an extremity will induce you to follow my counsel, I must even come to it. Marion is not what you have supposed her. You imagine that her love for you has kept her single. Ask of whom you will if such be the general opinion. Till yesterday she gave herself to another, who cannot aspire to a thousandth part of your merit, but who happened to be more favoured by fortune. Last night you became the richest, and she changed ; but would

Vibert be contented with a partner who preferred another ?”

“Marcus!—this other! It is of yourself you speak ?”

“Ask all the world if she did not make herself notorious with me. She made me distrust all woman-kind. Vibert, let us both leave her to the reflections of one who has deserved to be forsaken.”

“May it not be that you, and not I, have mistaken her? She might have preferred your company because you were my friend, and you might have fancied that she loved you because you loved her. It is needless to contradict me; men do not tremble and turn pale because their friends are going to marry jilts. I do not blame you, for not to love Marion is beyond the power even of friendship. Let us only be fair rivals, and not attempt to discourage each other by doing her injustice. Let us go hand in hand, and each prefer his suit. For my part I promise you that, if you succeed, I will yield without enmity.”

Marcus staggered as he arose; Vibert's countenance was grave, but not unfriendly.

“Go on, then,” said the former, in a deep, broken voice, and with every feature convulsed; at the same time he turned himself homeward, and Vibert, seeing that it was advisable to part company, pursued his course towards Silvermere. Marcus made but a few strides, and paused. He clenched his teeth, and cast a wild glance at the fine form that was retreating from him—made one or two hesitating steps, and then bounded after.

The restlessness which pervaded the other personages of our story during the night was not spared to Marion or her sister. They talked of their future prospects, until Edith was elevated to her highest flight of spirits. She arranged that when Marion became the lady of Hazledell she also was to call it her home; make herself the sole object of attraction and tournament to all the squires round about, and display her true dignity by remaining a scornful lady and a respectable maiden aunt! By degrees her fancy ceased castle-building, a few unconnected sparkles of gaiety grew fainter and fainter, and she dropped asleep. Marion had no wish or power to repose, her nervous sense of apprehension continued to increase; she tried every effort to direct her thoughts to other subjects, but they invariably became entangled, and again pressed with a dead weight upon her heart. In this mood she was startled by Edith laughing in her sleep, with a sound which terrified her.

"Edith!" she cried, shaking her till she partially awoke,—“Edith, you frighten me—why do you laugh in your sleep?”

“I laughed,” replied Edith, drowsily, and scarce knowing what she said,—“I laughed at some one who preached to me of the vanity of human expectations.” She again muttered a laugh, and a second time dropped asleep. She still remained so when Marion arose in the morning and hastily dressed herself to profit by the fresh air, and did not awaken until she had been left some hours alone. The servants told her that her

sister had walked out upon the road to Hazledell, and thither Edith followed her.

Marion was led on by the hope of meeting Vibert, who in former days had often arrived to breakfast, so far as the commencement of the Black Valley. At other times she had shared in the general terror inspired by the spot; but her feelings were now concentrated upon another subject, and she mused along, heedless of the gloom which surrounded her. In this mood she was startled by a sound like the report of a gun; but the wind was too high to distinguish clearly, and it might have been only the cracking of some time-worn stem. Her heart beat quicker, and she hastened her step. It was Vibert, perhaps, on his way to meet her, and her lips unconsciously pronounced the words, "Vibert, God bless you!" Presently she distinguished the figure of a man rapidly advancing towards her. He stopped a moment where two paths separated, as if hesitating which he should take; then hurried on, without perceiving her until he found himself by her side. It was the rejected Marcus. His face was distorted and convulsed, his clothes and flesh rent by the brambles, and his voice like that of one from the grave.

"Marion!" he exclaimed, standing stiff and motionless, as though he had been suddenly frozen, "what evil spirit has sent you to confront your victim? Go home, Marion, and leave the maniac to his den."

She regarded him a moment in extreme astonishment, and then burst into tears.

"Good God!" she cried, "is it possible that a person so valueless as I am can have caused this dreadful change! How could I love you, when my heart had long been another's? I offered you my friendship—from my soul I offer it again. For my sake, for Vibert's, do not cloud our happiness by the thought that we have wounded the peace of another, much less of one who will be so dear to us. Return with me home; dear Edith has still a heart to give you."

He answered, with a smile of savage bitterness, "I thank her; I do not want it. Yours has cost me somewhat, and it is hard to labour in vain. Promise me, Marion, promise me, in case of Vibert's—death——"

"Of Vibert's death!—what mean such horrible words? All things seem ominous of woe to me. In Heaven's name, speak again, and do not stand so motionless and ghastly. What is it that you see?"

Marcus slowly raised his arm, and pointed to a raven, which was battling its way against the wind. He spoke not a word, but kept his eye fixed upon the bird till it toiled over their heads, and, at a short distance, swooped into the thicket. It was followed by another, and another. He maintained the same aspect, and Marion, astonished by the strange scene, which accorded so well with her previous presentiments, could scarcely restrain a stifled scream.

Marcus was roused. "It is a strange instinct," said he. "Those heaven-instructed birds seem formed for the detection of—of the farmer's lost cattle, which have

strayed away and died ! They scent blood afar off ; their note is harrowing. Come away—come away—I will conduct you home !”

He grasped Marion by the wrist, and was leading her away, when two of the ravens rose up in clamorous combat for a disputed morsel. Unable to direct their course, the wind carried them back towards the spot where Marcus and Marion were standing ; and a part of the contended booty, dropping from their beaks, was wafted to the feet of the latter. She eagerly snatched it up—it was a curly lock of black hair ! A momentary impulse endowed her with twice the strength of Marcus, and she wrenched her arm from his grasp.

“ Yonder carcass,” she exclaimed, hysterically, “ is neither stag nor steer ;” and she sprang towards the scene with a supernatural swiftness. Marcus uttered a vain cry to restrain her, and disappeared, feeling his way more than seeing it, as though the world afforded no home and no purpose to direct his course.

Shortly after Edith arrived at the place where they had parted, having traced the small foot of her sister in the damp soil. She was alarmed to find it turn in amongst the brambles, and called out, but received no answer. The wind blew her voice back, and the tortuous stems of ragged Scots fir, intermixed with every other species of hardy plant, permitted her eager glance to penetrate but a few yards. She forced her way into the maze, and, by the aid of the boughs, clambered partly up the side of the valley to where a large scale that had fallen from the rocks had separated

into fragments upon a bank of yellow sand, overgrown with fern and furze. It was called the Badger's Bank, being filled with the earths of that animal, which shared it in common with the wild cat, and birds of prey that came thither to gorge upon victims. Amidst the ruin of this scene stood Marion—her long black hair streaming in the blast, and her arms extended to scare away a multitude of the dismal birds which had directed her thither. At her feet lay the form of Vibert—his face overspread with its last hue, and his temples shattered to pieces!

When search was made the sisters were found still protecting the body, and both bereft of reason. Edith had loved Vibert no less fervently than Marion had done, but her devotion to her had rendered silence no sacrifice. To see her sister happy was to be blessed herself, and had it not been for this unlooked-for catastrophe her secret would never have been known.

We will not swell our history with an account of the long interval that elapsed ere the sisters were restored, in a degree, to their right minds. Their first question, on their partial recovery, related to Vibert's uncle: his infirm frame had sunk beneath his affliction, and he lay in the family vault, beside his unfortunate nephew. There was yet another name which neither of them dared to pronounce. But the question was divined, and Marcus, they were told, had never been heard of; a body, too decayed to be recognised, had been found in a distant forest, and might have been his—it was but

a surmise, and, whether true or false, there has never been any other.

Years passed away, but the characters of Marion and Edith resumed no more their natural tone. The last was never seen to smile again, nor the first to drop a tear—misfortune had stricken them into a strange apathy, and their only pleasure was to wander, linked in each other's arms, upon the high grounds, from whence they could descry the church where Vibert lay. They were never seen elsewhere, nor in any society but that of each other, although all the world were their friends. Those who had loved them respected their sorrow too much to intrude upon it, and those who had been jealous of being outshone had ceased to have any cause. The admirers who had pursued them turned sadly from their vague regard, and would as soon have thought of obtaining the stars themselves.

This lasted but a few years. The fatal remembrance, which slept neither night nor day, drank greedily of the springs of life. They faded almost to phantoms, and death seemed to think his prey scarcely worth the striking, for their departure was unmarked by a single pang. Edith, whose natural temperament had the least repose, was the first to drop—she died clasping her sister's neck; and Marion followed in time to be interred in the same grave.

TIT FOR TAT.

BY ISABEL VERNON.

CHAPTER I.

MISS BELLA QUIGLEY was troubled, and she was indignant as well. It was something of more than ordinary importance that had disturbed her serene mind, for it was seldom her smooth brow was knit in such a heavy frown ; seldom the red lips pressed so hard one upon the other. And there was almost a tragic air in the manner in which she flourished her crochet needle. She drew the worsted around the ivory as if she were fastening the noose around the neck of some poor culprit whom she was about to swing off to perdition, and she stabbed the antimacassar she was forming with an energy that would have done credit to a buccaneer.

Crocheting was Miss Bella's pet amusement ; and the Quigley mansion, from attic to basement, was filled with trophies of her skill. But this mild dissipation had lost its charms for her to-day. What could be the matter ? It could not be any love affair that had ruffled her temper, for Miss Bella was past that age

when the sly little god is supposed to enter the feminine mind. She had certainly passed her thirtieth birthday, and the knowing ones whispered that she had slipped past the half-way stone that lies between thirty and forty. They (the knowing ones) might have spoken it aloud for all Miss Bella would have cared, for she made no secret of her age—even cheerfully acknowledged herself an “old maid”—an act which her very young lady friends looked upon with astonishment and commiseration.

Time, however, had been very good to Miss Bella. Her hair was just as dark and abundant, her eyes as bright and black, and her cheeks as rosy as in the days long past, when beaux and bearded faces possessed more interest for her than now.

Indeed, she was so pretty and kind-hearted that, to use the phrase of her seventeen-years-old niece, to her confidential friend, Eleanor Tracy, “It was a wonder that some good man had not carried her off long ago.” But Miss Bella possessed a trait of character that is not particularly admired by gentlemen. She was what the Yankees term “square edged,” that is, she had a way of looking at the world through a pair of very clear, sharp eyes, and it must be a very deep plot that could deceive her.

Men, as a general thing, enjoy being worshipped. And they like to impress their lady friends with a proper sense of their superiority. It is such a gratification to see soft eyes—black, blue, or grey—raised to them in wondering admiration; and they are not always

particular how they obtain this homage. Miss Bella was apt to discover the little tricks and deceptions men sometimes resort to, to conceal their small peccadilloes from the feeble feminine mind; and when she did she exposed them without mercy. For this reason her gentlemen friends were a good deal afraid of her.

But this morning on which our story opens something had happened to annoy her exceedingly. Whatever it was, the other occupants of the cosy sitting-room did not seem to be visibly affected by it. They were two young ladies—Miss Eleanor Tracy and Miss Alice Quigley, ensconced in comfortable easy chairs, removed a respectful distance from Miss Bella's frowns and flashing needle.

Miss Eleanor Tracy was studying the design of a tidy of elaborate workmanship, that adorned the back of a sofa opposite, with an air of profound meditation, for she had stared steadily at it without speaking for the last fifteen minutes.

Miss Alice sat curled up in her chair, her dimpled face supported by one plump hand, and a roguish smile that was almost a laugh curling her ruby lips.

Miss Bella's uneasiness seemed to amuse her immensely, for, patting the arm of the chair softly, she said,—

"Now, Aunt Bell, I would not fret about Mr. Vernon; I am sure he is quite capable of taking care of himself. And I am equally able to take care of myself."

"I have no doubt that Mr. Vernon will take care of himself; my anxiety is not for him," returned Miss

Bella, "but I would warn you against him with all the eloquence of which I am possessed. I know what the self-confidence of seventeen is, and I know on what a frail foundation it rests. And I know also that Mr. Vernon has lived more than twice as long in the world as you have, and that he is a most unprincipled trifler with fresh young girls like you. And if you value your peace of mind you will decline his attentions. I had hoped," she continued bitterly, "that he would pass you by—that he would be content not to drag this fair young lily in the dust."

Alice sprang from her seat, shook out her flounces, and danced across the room.

"Now, auntie," she exclaimed, smoothing her auburn crimps before the mirror, "you are dreadfully tragic this morning. Who knows but this invincible gentleman, after having flown from flower to flower and tasted all the sweets, will lay his money-bags and his immaculate self at the feet of your irresistible niece? Don't you think I would make a lovely mistress for the big mansion on the hill? What do you think, Nell?" turning her bright eyes toward Miss Tracy.

But that young lady was so much engaged just then in examining a picture over the mantel that she either did not hear or did not choose to reply.

"I will tell you what I think," said Miss Bella, giving her work another stab. "I think that Mr. Vernon has flirted with a dozen girls just as pretty and just as engaging as you; that you are in no way superior to many to whom he has whispered his flatteries and fine

promises—and deserted. And you will probably share their fate. You need not flatter yourself, for you will never be the mistress of Mr. Vernon's handsome house. He is not a marrying man."

Miss Bella suddenly stopped, for the subject of her tirade was coming up the steps.

Mr. Vernon's reception by the three ladies was characteristic.

Miss Alice advanced a half-dozen steps to meet him, and stopped, blushing and smiling. He held her little hand in his in a soft, close clasp, all the while gazing down into her cherub face with the most beautiful pair of eyes in the world—so thought the silly child.

Miss Bella received him with a calm, ladylike indifference, and her fingers slipped coolly through his as he bowed above them with an air of devotion that would have been extremely fascinating to a woman of less sense.

Miss Tracy had arisen as he entered, and as he turned toward her the crimson blood blazed in a fiery glow across her face. Her greeting was quiet and constrained—his suave and affable.

Mr. Vernon was a very handsome man ; even Miss Bella could not deny that. He was tall and rather stout, but not clumsily so, and he carried his pounds avoirdupois with an ease and grace that were the envy of many lighter men. His forehead was high and white, and its narrowness was redeemed by the waving black hair that swept above it. His features were well formed and regular ; his mouth shaded but not concealed

by a dark and silky moustache. But in his eyes lay the chief attraction, and cold indeed must be the damsel who could look into their depths unmoved. They were large and very dark, almost black, and shaded by long and curling black lashes ; but it was their power of expression that made them so fascinating, and they would melt or flash or burn with a starlike lustre, at the will of their capricious owner. Added to his personal attractions, he was the possessor of an ample fortune ; and the handsome house on the hill that Alice had alluded to had been the desire of more than one fair lady.

There are few men with heads strong enough to withstand the flatteries of women. He may be proof against the allurements of wine, and the possession of wealth may not augment his pride ; but let him become assured that the ladies, one and all, are ready and willing to worship him, that he can have any fair hand for the asking, and it is his ruin. His respect for the softer sex decreases in the same ratio that their flatteries and attentions to himself increase ; and by-and-bye he begins to think that young ladies are possessed of neither heart nor intellect—are made merely for his amusement—and he trifles with them accordingly. I have sometimes thought, when I have seen two or three young girls using every effort to attract the notice of some desirable but indifferent Adonis, if they only knew the worth of a little judicious letting alone they would practise it oftener. Men who respect themselves seldom marry women they do not respect ; and they never respect girls who boldly seek their society.

Mr. Vernon was intellectually no way superior to the generality of his sex ; and he had been so much sought after and courted by his fair friends that his vanity and self-conceit were intolerable. And still the ladies, although they knew him to be a most unprincipled masculine coquette, had even heard sly stories of certain pranks of his that bordered on the disgraceful, still reserved their sweetest smiles, their warmest welcome, for him.

Mr. Vernon had lengthened out his call upon the Quigley ladies as long as was compatible with the laws of fashion. He had exerted his efforts to please, and his efforts were not without success. Miss Alice and Miss Tracy were soon chatting with him familiarly and pleasantly, and even Miss Bella's icy manner had somewhat thawed ; but the frown gathered again as he rose to leave.

"Miss Alice," he said, turning to her, "do you attend the party at Mrs. Elliott's the day after to-morrow evening ? and if you are not otherwise engaged, shall I have the pleasure of attending you there ?"

Alice blushed and smiled assent, and Miss Bella said icily,—

"I intended to chaperone my niece myself."

"My dear Miss Quigley," he interrupted playfully, "you ought to thank me for taking her off your hands. I really do not think it will be safe for Miss Alice to go unless I attend her."

"I think she would be much safer without you," said

the caustic Miss Bella ; " but since she has given her consent I have no power to control her."

Mr. Vernon laughed amusedly, and, with a smile still upon his face, bowed himself out. His footsteps had scarcely ceased to echo upon the sidewalk when Miss Tracy, suddenly remembering an engagement, hastily took leave.

Alice at the window watched her as she slowly crossed the street.

" Nell is a little vexed, isn't she ? " she said, turning to Miss Bella.

" I did not remark it ; what has happened to vex her ? "

" Why," with a little embarrassed laugh, " because Mr. Vernon has transferred his attentions from herself to me."

" Oh, indeed ! If she is at all sensitive on that point she conceals it very well, for I did not observe any change in her behaviour. At all events, I do not see why she should take it seriously ; she must have expected he would transfer his attentions to someone else sooner or later. Any other course would be entirely at variance with his usual behaviour."

" But she did not expect it," said Alice. " I know by some remarks she has made to me. And I myself thought he was serious at last, he appeared so much in earnest. And don't tell me she accepts his slights with indifference. Did you not see how she blushed when he came in ? and the odd expression that swept over her face when he asked me to accompany him to the party ? "

"I did not indeed, for I was so much engrossed with my anxiety for you that I had no thought for anyone else."

Alice bit her lip for a moment, and then said pettishly,—

"I don't see, Aunt Bella, why you fret so much about me. I have told you that I am quite able to take care of myself. And if papa and mamma do not object to Mr. Vernon, why should you?"

"Your mother's health is so poor that she concerns herself very little with what is passing around her, and depends almost wholly upon me to see that her household affairs are well conducted. And your father is so engrossed with business cares, and his anxiety for his wife, that he knows very little about anything else. For these reasons I feel much more responsibility in the matter than I otherwise would. But I shall say no more," she continued, rising to leave the room; "only remember, if Mr. Vernon's conduct ever gives you the heartache, that you were warned against him."

CHAPTER II.

It was the evening of the party. Miss Bella and Alice in gay attire were awaiting their respective cavaliers. Miss Bella looked elegant and stylish in a heavy trained silk of old gold, with draperies and trimmings of rich black lace. Her round arms and throat were clasped with bands of gold set with rubies, and a spray of the same brilliant gems glowed against her raven hair.

Alice was very pretty and charming in her waltzing dress of white satin and tulle, with clusters of moss roses and buds looping back its full draperies, and nestling in the lace upon her bosom.

"Nell tells me," she was saying, as she twisted the stems of a cluster of moss rose buds and tried the effect against her bright hair—"Nell tells me that she is expecting her cousin—a Miss Keene, from ever so far out west—expects her to arrive in season to grace the party with her presence. Nell says she is a beauty and a great belle. She is to spend the winter, and Nell is anticipating much pleasure from her society."

"And Mr. Vernon will have another opportunity to indulge in another first-class flirtation," said Miss Bella.

Alice's face crimsoned. "I do not see why you should suppose any such thing. You are for ever dragging Mr. Vernon's name into your conversation. I presume he will be polite to her, as he is to all ladies, and nothing more," tossing her head haughtily.

"The carriage for Miss Quigley," announced the servant at the door, and there was no time for further controversy.

Mr. Vernon had kept his lady waiting until her patience was well-nigh exhausted, and a small wrinkle was beginning to plough its way between her brows when the carriage rolled up to the door. The wheels had scarcely ceased to sound upon the pavement when he was in the room, and coming toward her with hands extended.

"My sweet moss rose," he said, in sweetest accents,

as he clasped her hands in his, "how charming you are to-night!" and, stooping, he pressed a kiss upon her baby mouth. Alice shrank away from him at this overt demonstration, and tried to draw her hands away; but, passing his arm gently around her, he drew her close to him. "Don't be afraid of me, dear," he whispered; "you look so fresh and sweet I really could not help it."

The beguiling face was close to hers, the bright serpent eyes were bent upon her own; Alice's power of resistance was gone; she had neither strength nor desire to move, and the hope in her heart that had only burned a feeble spark sprang into flame. He saw his power, and, with a low laugh of triumph, bent and kissed her again.

"Tell me," she said, "are the dreadful stories true they tell of you? I hear them on every side, but I cannot—will not believe them."

"What stories?" he asked, smoothing her hair.

"Why—oh, I don't know!" she stammered. "But they say you are very treacherous and deceitful with young girls. It isn't so, is it?" looking up pleadingly into his face.

Mr. Vernon winced at the straightforward question, and the steady gaze of the innocent eyes.

"Of course not," he replied, recovering himself. "Of course not; it is only envious people who say such cruel things. But it is time to go," drawing her cloak about her; "I'm afraid we are late as it is."

Dancing had commenced when they entered Mrs.

Elliott's brilliantly-lighted and well-filled rooms. Mr. Vernon danced twice with Alice, before he was willing to release her to another partner. The third and fourth dances were over, and Alice had accepted Mr. Vernon's arm for a promenade. They had stopped to rest a few moments near the open glass doors that separated the parlours from the conservatory, when a bustle at the opposite entrance attracted their attention. A group of new-comers was just entering the room. Mr. Vernon immediately recognized Mr. Tracy and his daughter Eleanor, but the lady who walked with them was a stranger. Mr. Vernon had met many fair faces, and bowed at many shrines, but he admitted to himself that he had never seen so beautiful a woman. Her face, figure, and dress were perfect. His critical eye could not discover a single imperfection. She was tall, with a well-rounded figure, although her height gave her the appearance of slenderness ; and every motion was easy and graceful. Her arms and neck might have served for a sculptor's model, so smooth and beautifully-rounded were they. Her head was well formed, and crowned with heavy braids of shining golden hair, her forehead low and broad, the eyebrows regularly and delicately pencilled above a pair of eyes the softest and most melting Mr. Vernon had ever seen. Her features were perfectly Grecian, and her complexion was as smooth and colourless as a lily. And what added to her charms was her perfect self-possession, and her seeming unconsciousness of the admiration she excited as she moved through the room.

As, leaning on Mr. Tracy's arm, she neared the spot where Mr. Vernon and Alice were standing, that gentleman was favoured with a full glance from those bewildering eyes that completely thrilled him.

"Who is that lady?" he asked, turning to Alice.

"That is Eleanor Tracy's cousin, a Miss Keene," Alice replied, an odd feeling of jealousy stirring within her as she saw his eyes follow the regal form. "Very handsome, is she not?"

Mr. Vernon made no reply, but a few moments later he resigned Alice to a gentleman who claimed her hand for the dance; and soon after she saw him seek out Mr. Tracy and obtain an introduction to the beautiful lady. As he led her out for the dance, she could but acknowledge them to be a very handsome couple; but her heart sank within her as she saw how readily he yielded himself to this new charmer. He was perfectly oblivious of the anxious eyes that watched him so closely. His were bent upon the lily-like face at his side, they never once wandered to where Alice was standing. He seemed to have entirely forgotten her presence.

"He will come back when the dance is over," thought Alice. But no—the merry waltz was ended. Her partner led her to a seat and made his parting bow, and she looked around for Mr. Vernon. She saw him in the distance, with Miss Keene upon his arm, going toward the music-room. Another dance passed, and another, before she saw him again; and when he appeared upon the floor Miss Keene was still beside

him. For the remainder of the evening his attentions to Alice were merely nominal. Her spirits utterly deserted her, and, too sick at heart to enjoy the mirth and gaiety around her, she withdrew to a quiet corner, where she might watch her rival unobserved.

"How do you like my cousin?" said a voice near her. "You seem to be watching her closely."

Alice turned. Eleanor Tracy was standing beside her, with a mocking smile upon her face. Alice controlled her voice with an effort.

"I think her very handsome," she said.

"So does Mr. Vernon"—Eleanor gave an odd little laugh—"and it doesn't look now as if he would lay his money-bags at your feet very soon, does it?" she added sarcastically, as she moved away.

There were other eyes than Miss Eleanor's that had observed Mr. Vernon's dereliction. Miss Bella was very indignant at the treatment her niece was receiving. It was growing very late, and since supper Mr. Vernon had not been near her once. Her distress was becoming apparent, when Miss Bella tapped her on the shoulder.

"Where is your gallant escort?" she asked. "Has he deserted you?"

"It looks like it." Alice tried vainly to choke back the tears with a faint smile.

"Come then, my dear," drawing Alice's hand within her arm, "you had better go home with me."

They had reached the hall when they met Mr. Vernon coming down the stairs, with Miss Keene,

hooded and cloaked, upon his arm. He stopped on seeing Alice.

"I was just coming for you," he said. "Are you going home? Excuse me one moment, till I see this lady to her carriage. I will be back directly."

"Only the little girl," she heard him explain to Miss Keene, as they passed on, "who came to the party with me."

And this was the man who, not six hours before, had given her every reason to believe that he loved her. A shiver ran through her as she thought of the kisses he had pressed upon her lips. "Oh!" she cried, with a sensation of loathing, "how utterly false he is!"

"You had better return with him, if he wishes it," Miss Bella whispered, on their way upstairs. "It will prevent remarks, and you can endure his society for a few moments."

Alice met him at the cloak-room door as she came out, and reluctantly accepted his arm. If she had had a faint hope he would apologise for his rudeness, she was disappointed. The ride home was mostly a silent one. He seemed engrossed with his own thoughts, and Alice was too deeply hurt to make any effort to arouse him.

His passion, so far as she was concerned, had taken its flight from the tropics to the polar regions. Only once did she allude to Miss Keene.

"I think her very beautiful," she said. "I trust you found her society agreeable."

"She is magnificent," he replied, with a long-drawn breath, and relapsed into silence.

Alice sat by the register, with the cloak still about her shoulders, as Miss Bella came in. She came forward without speaking, and, sinking into a seat, began leisurely to pull off her gloves.

For a few moments there was silence between them. Alice sat quite still, vainly trying to control her feelings; but the remembrance of all the mortification she had been made to endure—the disappointment and sense of loss—were too much for her resolution, and, bowing her head upon the arm of her chair, she broke into violent weeping. The slender form fairly shook and trembled with the sobs that came so thick and fast.

Miss Bella was wise as well as good. She did not attempt to stay the storm of passion with words, she only drew the bowed head to her shoulder, and smoothed back the soft curls from the flushed face. By-and-bye the violence of her grief had spent itself, and only sobs and long-drawn sighs betokened the sorrow that lay at her heart.

Then Miss Bella spoke: "It is a lesson we all have to learn, dear, sooner or later—the lesson of distrust—and an experience we all have to pass through ourselves; no other person's advice or warning will leave indelible marks upon our hearts as our own trials will do, but it is not likely to make us much happier, though it leaves us wiser."

"Oh, Aunt Bell!" Alice exclaimed, her arms around Miss Bella's neck, "I can never trust anybody again."

"Don't say that! You have had a sharp experience to-night, but it must not cause you to avoid society. Men, as a general thing, have more faults than women,—no, I will not say more faults, but they live more in the world, see more of evil, and they possess different faults from women. Their discrimination between good and evil is not so sharp. But I am happy in the thought that there are few men so utterly devoid of all sense of honour—so utterly selfish—as Mr. Vernon."

They sat silent for a little while. It was evident there was something Alice wanted to say, yet dreaded to say it. At last, summoning up all her courage, she asked—

"Aunt Bell, what is your opinion of Miss Keene? I saw you speaking with her."

Miss Bella hesitated; she disliked to give pain, yet would speak only the truth.

"I think," she began slowly, "that she is a very beautiful woman."

"Yes, I know," interrupted Alice, "but is she so very fascinating? The charms of a pretty face alone will soon wear away, you know," with a bitter smile.

"I only conversed with her a few moments," Miss Bella continued. "Mr. Vernon hovered about her so constantly that there was not much opportunity for anybody else to form her acquaintance; but from the little of her society that I enjoyed I admired her very much. She is much older than you. I should judge her to be twenty-five, at least. She possesses a highly cultivated mind, has travelled much, and always mingled

in the best society ; and in manner and breeding appears the perfect lady. I have never had the pleasure of meeting a more agreeable person. This is the opinion I formed at first acquaintance. Perhaps, should I know her better, I might think differently. What did Mr. Vernon say of her ? ”

“ He said she was ‘ magnificent ’ ; he seemed perfectly infatuated with her,” replied Alice slowly.

Miss Bella smiled. “ Very likely ; but I shall be much disappointed in Miss Keene if he satisfies either her intellect or her heart. But come, my dear,” she added, rising, “ it’s time you were at rest ; and don’t let your regrets for that false man disturb your sleep.”

CHAPTER III.

MR. VERNON’S infatuation for Miss Keene did not abate as the weeks flew by. Indeed, a more intimate acquaintance with the Western belle seemed only to augment his passion. Nearly every morning Alice saw him ushered in at Mr. Tracy’s door. Every pleasant afternoon, now that the snow had come, were his elegant new sleigh and span of spirited horses drawn up before the opposite entrance, and Miss Keene—sometimes accompanied by Eleanor Tracy, but oftener with only Mr. Vernon as a companion—was whirled away on a long afternoon drive. If Miss Eleanor had cherished any resentment towards Mr. Vernon for former slights to herself, she had evidently buried the hatchet ; for there was no appearance of animosity in

her manner toward him. She even encouraged his attentions to Miss Keene, and when she could do so without appearing intrusive, did whatever lay in her power to increase his admiration for her beautiful cousin.

"I never gave Nell Tracy credit for such an unselfish disposition," thought Alice, one evening at a party, after watching her for half-an-hour, as she manœuvred secretly, but assiduously, to bring about a *tête-à-tête* between Mr. Vernon and Miss Keene, an opportunity the gentleman was evidently longing for.

"I have always thought her a most unscrupulous minx, but I must confess her present conduct puzzles me. I am sorry if I have ever misjudged her."

She said something of the kind to her aunt that night, after their return home.

Miss Bella smiled serenely. "Time will tell," she said, as she kissed the upturned, innocent face.

It was well for Alice that she had plucked every thought of Mr. Vernon from her breast, and closed her heart against him for ever; for from the night of that eventful party he had been so engrossed with his new love that he ignored her entirely.

Such marked and persistent attentions as he displayed towards Miss Keene could not pass unheeded, and by-and-bye society began to whisper that, after escaping so many skilfully-laid nets, at last Mr. Vernon had fallen a victim to Miss Keene's many charms—was really and desperately in love. And for once society was right Mr. Vernon, for the first time in his life, was sincerely and

earnestly in love. He acknowledged the fact to himself ; and he also acknowledged—and perhaps it added zest to the pursuit—that he was not at all sure of the lady. Miss Keene was always pleasant, always graceful, always ladylike, but there was a certain intangible something about her that kept him at a distance. He had discovered in an early stage of their acquaintance that he could not pave his way into her good graces with sugarplums of compliment. She had evidently received too much of this cheap coin of society to value it at more than its true worth. Only once did he venture to address words of flattery and insincerity to her, but then he received such a look from the blue eyes that brought the blood to his face and silenced him effectually. For once he was at a loss how to proceed. She was so different from other women. His admiration and respect for her were so great, that even the touch of her hand, a glance from her beautiful eyes, thrilled him through and through. She was, in his estimation, as much superior to the women he had known as a beautiful white lily is superior to a buttercup. The thought sometimes alarmed him that tales of some of his escapades might reach her ears ; but he comforted himself with the thought that women are not fond of parading their discomfiture, they had much rather tell their triumphs. So he argued with himself.

But Mr. Vernon was getting restless. This uncertainty was becoming intolerable. He must and would know his fate ; so he had resolved many times. He was not a bashful man ; but when the opportunity

arrived his courage utterly failed him. The thought that he might possibly lose her for ever completely unnerved him. But at last the time came when he resolved to put his fortune to the test.

They were out riding together. It was a beautiful moonlight evening. The crisp snow sparkled and crackled beneath the fleet footsteps of his prancing horses, and the sharp air, and, perhaps, some subtle emotion, had brought a bright light to Miss Keene's eyes, and a soft pink flush to the usually pale face. Mr. Vernon thought he had never seen her look more lovely; and an uncontrollable desire to possess this bit of feminine perfection came over him. They had ridden some distance, and there had been silence between them for a time, when, as they left the city behind and struck into the smooth country road, Mr. Vernon suddenly drew his horses into a walk.

"Miss Keene," he commenced abruptly, and there was a tremble in his voice oddly at variance with his usual self-confident manner, "I have a great favour to ask at your hands."

Miss Keene turned towards him, and flashed a glance into his eyes that set his pulses throbbing strangely; but gathering up all his courage he dashed on. He told her in eloquent and rapid speech how dear she had grown to be to him; how of all the women he had ever met she alone had the power to move his heart. He pictured to her the gloom of doubt and uncertainty he had lived in for the last few weeks; and he told her how it lay in her hands to change all this—to make him

the happiest of men ; and ended by humbly offering for her acceptance himself and all his worldly possessions. It was done now, and with an impatience that bordered on desperation he awaited her answer.

The colour faded from Miss Keene's cheek, and she essayed twice to speak before she could control her voice.

"It grieves me to give you pain, but I do not love you," she said at last. "And"—she hesitated for a moment, and then went steadily on—"I don't believe I ever could. I could not love a man I do not respect. And I can never respect one whom I am assured will deliberately win the heart of an innocent young girl only to trample it under his feet."

"You mean," he said, turning towards her fiercely, "that you do not approve of flirtation. Then, what do you call your treatment of me?"

"I believe I have never given you good reason to think that I cared for you above other men; but perhaps you are entitled to an explanation of my having accepted your invitations so frequently. Most gentlemen would have considered it a mark of favour, and not necessary to explain; but an explanation you shall have. Even in my distant home I had heard of you as a most unscrupulous trifler—a veritable lady-killer, in fact. I had heard of such creatures, but had never met one, and my curiosity to behold such a specimen of masculine humanity was great. I am an authoress, and I, in my line of work, make human nature a study, and every new idiosyncrasy of character,

especially masculine character, I hail with delight. You have afforded me much amusement, and some instruction. I thank you for both ; but believe me, I never supposed you were serious in your attentions to me. I thought you were only indulging in another flirtation. I leave here to-morrow, and I trust you will soon forget this unpleasant episode. Take me home, please."

Mr. Vernon turned his horses sharply around, and started homeward at a furious pace. Not another word was spoken until they reached Mr. Tracy's door. He handed Miss Keene out, and with a curt "good-night" sprang into his sleigh and drove swiftly away.

Miss Keene found Miss Eleanor waiting for her when she entered the parlour.

"Well?" said that young lady, eyeing her cousin sharply.

"Well?" repeated Miss Keene, as she dropped wearily into a seat. "Well, it is all over ; but don't set any more tasks for me, Nell dear ; they are not to my taste."

"I don't care!" exclaimed Miss Nell, clapping her hands in an ecstasy of delight and triumph. "He knows, now, just how good it is himself."

Mr. Vernon drove home in a demoralised condition. It would be impossible to depict the emotions of anger, dismay, and injured self-love that raged within his bosom. To be told by the most beautiful woman in the world that she did not love him was bad enough : but to be also told that she did not respect him, and had been amusing herself at his expense, was a little

too much. For once in his life he had been made to bite the dust without mercy. If in his pain and mortification he remembered for an instant the tender young hearts that had been immolated on the altar of his vanity, the recollection did not lighten so much as by a feather's weight the heaviness of his present sorrow. But he would not acknowledge, even to himself, that he deserved such a lesson. It could not be that any silly girl could suffer as he was suffering.

A week later a group of girls was gathered in the sitting-room of the Quigley mansion, but Eleanor Tracy was not among the number.

Miss Bella, with crochet-hook in hand, was engaged upon a new and gorgeous pattern, in many coloured wools. There was an expression of sweet serenity upon her face, beautiful to behold, as she listened to the Babel of voices around her. The subject that engaged these young ladies' thoughts and tongues was one in which they were all more or less interested, namely : What could be the matter with Mr. Vernon ? Something serious must have occurred, they all agreed, to change the gay debonair gentleman, ready with smile and bow, and glib of speech, to a sullen, unsocial recluse. "For," said one, "I met him yesterday in the street, and instead of greeting me with his usual elaborate politeness, he pulled his hat over his eyes, and brushed past without even speaking."

"And I," another, "invited him to our house Thursday evening, and he neither came nor sent any excuse."

"And I," chimed in a third, "wanted to see Mr. Vernon particularly this morning, about those tableaux we have been talking about. I wanted him to personate one or two of the principal characters. I failed to meet him on the street, or at any public place, so thought I would call at his house. Well, he met me at the door, and he was such a figure. I looked twice before I could convince myself it was really he. His hair was uncombed, his slippers down at the heels, his linen was deplorably wrinkled and soiled, and he had on neither collar nor necktie. He acknowledged my presence with a frown that fairly frightened me; and when I made known my business declined curtly, muttering something about 'being sick to death of such tomfoolery,' and actually slammed the door in my very face."

They were dreadfully puzzled, and appealed to Miss Bella to clear up the mystery for them, if possible. A smile played over Miss Bella's face as she busily counted her stitches, and her smooth voice fell like oil upon the troubled waters.

"I think I can tell you the meaning of the change in Mr. Vernon—one—two—three. It means that Miss Keene has wound up his worsted for him in a most beautiful manner,—four—five,—and I think he had better now retire to a monastery, and spend the rest of his days in devotion and meditation. Five—six—seven!"

That evening, as Miss Bella sat watching the bright winter moon as it sailed up the sparkling sky, a pair

of soft arms stole around her neck and a pair of soft lips touched her cheek, and Alice's voice said tenderly,—

“What a lucky girl I am to have such a good Aunt Bell! Do you know,” seating herself on a cushion at her aunt's feet, and laying her head in her lap, “that I too met Mr. Vernon to-day? although I didn't want to say anything about it to the girls. But, oh, Aunt Bella! how could I ever have fancied myself in love with him, or thought him handsome? He looked positively plain to-day. Perhaps he had some recollection of the last time we met, for he made a desperate effort to appear at ease in my society, but his sickly attempts at gallantry filled me with disgust. I am afraid I showed something of my feeling in my face, for he turned away intensely mortified. I suppose Nell Tracy is jubilant over the success of her plot, and she has reason to be. But for myself, I feel like thanking her for opening my eyes to Mr. Vernon's real character before it was too late.”

THE STRANGER PATRON.

BY WILLIAM J. THOMS.

THE setting sun tinted with his golden beams the bright vine leaves that clustered luxuriantly round the little window of the studio in which Giulio Arnolfo, the ablest sculptor in Florence, studied and practised those principles of art by means of which he hoped to gain, at last, that far-distant and uncertain reward of genius—the admiration of posterity; and the valley by which Florence is surrounded, lighted by his gorgeous splendour, presented a scene so perfectly beautiful and picturesque, that it had succeeded in withdrawing for a time Giulio's attention from the model which he was then about to finish, and his thoughts from that dearer object on which they were more frequently employed—his beloved Berta.

While he gazed with the passionate intensity of an artist on the surrounding landscape glowing in the brilliancy of departing day, and on the distant hills, whose various heights and situations contributed, by the diversity of their colours, to complete the beauty of a scene calculated to inspire deep feelings of poetry and

devotion, the hum of the busy city, the gentle murmur of the Arno meandering in its peaceful course, and the vesper chimes of the neighbouring churches and monasteries, plunged him into a deep and sorrowful reverie. He at length aroused himself. "It is indeed very beautiful, and yet I cannot gaze on it without sadness; something oppresses me, some undefinable feeling of sorrow mysteriously arises from this vast field of beauty to weigh down my naturally buoyant spirits. Strange, that the contemplation of such magnificence should at once delight the eye by its brightness, and plunge the soul into despondency by the dark and hidden fancies which it gives rise to! But a truce to such folly; I must to Berta. If she miss her walk, I shall return ungladdened by her smiles and thanks, which outvalue all the fine feelings in Italy." So saying, he was about to leave the apartment, when the door opened, and he was prevented by the entrance of a stranger.

He was a man of noble appearance, who, by the dignity and refinement of his manners more than by his commanding figure and richness of apparel, impressed upon his beholders the conviction of his superior rank. Though somewhat past the prime of life, his step had not lost its elasticity, nor was the original vigour of his frame diminished; and his countenance, which bespoke a calm and philosophic endurance of the ills of this world, possessed at the same time an indescribable expression of power and benevolence, calculated to procure for him alternately fear and reverence. He was dressed in mourning, but the materials of his habit

were of the most costly nature ; and a diamond cross which was suspended to a broad crimson riband round his neck, shone in mournful though brilliant contrast to his otherwise sombre costume. Giulio, who at first imagined the interruption might have proceeded from the arrival of one of the many idlers who frequented the studio of the artist, apparently less for the purpose of purchasing than of retarding their productions, was about to protest against being detained, when he was arrested by the superior demeanour of his visitor, whose appearance seemed to promise the only recompense which could be made for delaying his visit to Berta—the probability of his becoming a patron, and one of rank and influence.

The stranger commenced the conversation.

“Signor Arnolfo, though hitherto personally unknown to me, I am acquainted with you through your productions, more especially one which has established your claim to the character of an enlightened and accomplished artist.”

Arnolfo bowed.

“I mean the Wounded Cupid in the collection of the Palazzo —. Impressed with admiration of your abilities, I have selected you as the artist by whom a sepulchral group, solemn in its design, and sad in its import, must be executed.”

“Must be—there is little need of must be when both fame and gold are to be had for the trial,” responded Arnolfo to himself ; but his visitor proceeded :

“The design is that of a youth mourning over the

dead body of his betrothed. The figures are to be the size of life, the price five thousand crowns, and the time of completion this day twelvemonth. Any alterations you may suggest, except as regards that point, I am not only willing but anxious to receive, but upon that I am determined—by this day next year the figures must be completed."

"Plague on his must be," again muttered Arnolfo; then addressing the stranger, said: "Signor, proud as I am of the task which you have been pleased to assign to me, I am still more so from the consciousness of having obtained that distinction by the former exertion of my humble talents, and will endeavour to prove my sense of your kindness by the punctuality and zeal with which I will obey your behest."

"I do not doubt it, Signor Arnolfo; but as I leave Florence immediately, and shall not return till the twelvemonth is expired, pray give me your ideas upon the interesting work which I have proposed to you."

"Willingly; and the more so as I should prefer for a subject, should you concur with me, a lover watching his expiring mistress, for of two distressing ideas, an amiable and affectionate maiden sunk in a placid sleep, the type and harbinger of death, eagerly and attentively watched by an afflicted lover in whose countenance is painted the horrible conflicts of love, anguish, hope, and despair, is less heartrending than to see the pallid corse of all of earthly that he ever loved, gazed on by the chosen of her heart, with love for what it has been and with horror at what it is—cold, unfeeling

clay, a tenant for the noisome grave and food for the worms of earth. I am perhaps, however, hazarding a conjecture on the arrangement of the group which may not accord with the object to which it is intended to apply it when finished. Pray, signor, what may that be ?

"Time will show," replied the stranger ; "in the meanwhile, let it be as you propose. There is but little difference between the glazed eye of the dying and the closed eye of the dead ; yet slight as it is, the here and the hereafter wait upon the change. I will now show you my idea of the positions into which I think the figures should be thrown." So saying, he took up a crayon, and hastily sketched upon the wall a rough but masterly outline of the design.

The spirit which pervaded this trifling performance increased the astonishment which seized the youthful artist when he remarked, that though every line was correct and expressive of the action of the group, the heads of both figures were wanting.

"I fear me, signor," said Arnolfo, "that my work will fall far short of what so great a master of the art would wish ; yet, spite of my fears, I must acknowledge myself greatly obliged for this specimen of your skill, and for the study which it will save me. Believe me, I do not mean to flatter you, but I feel that in embodying that idea I shall produce a masterpiece."

"Your commendation is flattering," replied the stranger. "I had but intended to assist, not to dictate your management of the work."

"Pardon me," continued Giulio, whose admiration and wonder increased as he contemplated the sketch; "pardon me, but I would fain know why one so talented has omitted the heads of the figures. Surely you, who have told the subjects by the headless trunks, have other reasons than fear of failure in the countenances for this omission?"

"Oh, there are many and good reasons for that, Signor Arnolfo, and perhaps none better than that I have improved upon the Grecian who veiled the face whose passions he dared not attempt to paint, and so have left them entirely to the imagination of the spectator. But the evening is fast closing. Are my terms such as you could wish?"

Giulio, who was overwhelmed by his liberality, expressed himself in the warmest terms of gratitude, and promised that his wishes should be attended to in every respect. "Here, then, is thy reward, Signor Arnolfo; but remember, thy task must be finished by this day twelvemonth. Fare thee well!" So saying, and having thrown a purse well filled with gold upon the table, the stranger took his departure.

The astonished Giulio immediately returned to the examination of the drawing on the wall, the beauty and truth of which plunged him into an ecstasy of admiration and delight. The more he gazed the greater was the wonder which it produced in him; but when, at the highest pitch of enthusiastic excitement, he recollected the emphatic manner in which his new patron had insisted upon the design being completed by a certain

time, his mysterious bearing, and the circumstance of his waiving all explanation of the purpose for which the statue was intended, he felt considerable repugnance to the undertaking, and would, if his visitor had not left him, have been inclined to throw aside the golden opportunity which presented itself, and to decline the newly offered patronage, despite the liberal reward attendant upon his exertions.

These circumstances contributed to allay the joy which he would otherwise have felt at the prospect of being shortly united to Berta, the possession of so large a sum removing the only obstacle to their union which existed ; and though the sight of the purse which remained untouched upon the table excited pleasing and brilliant hopes within his breast, the events of the evening appeared so mysterious and unintelligible, that on the consideration of them he relapsed into the fit of melancholy from which he had scarcely roused himself at the entrance of his visitor, and which was renewed with increased force at his departure.

But Giulio's was a restless and vacillating spirit ; and by the time he had hastily cleared up his studio, arranged like a very lover his attire, and arrived at the dwelling of his Berta, he had shaken off the gloom which enveloped his mind, and was all light and air at the tidings he was about to communicate.

Glad and joyous that night was the meeting of Giulio and Berta, for it was the first in which, with any well-founded hope, they had deliberated upon plans of future happiness. The more than womanly mildness of Berta

was shown in the deep-felt silence and grateful tears by which she evinced her delight and satisfaction at the brilliant prospect which now opened before them ; while Giulio, ever enthusiastic and impetuous, revelled midst hastily formed schemes of future conduct, and visionary ideas of never-ending enjoyment.

Wild and incoherent were the fancies which floated before his heated imagination. Now would he purchase a villa on the banks of the Arno, where the presence of his Berta should cheer and encourage him in his studies ; and now he determined not to quit Florence, but enjoy with her the society to which he hoped his talents would introduce them ; and as he hastily and impetuously expressed his quickly changing thoughts, the flash of his eye, the rapidity of his utterance, the very tone of his voice, were so peculiar and expressive, that they seemed the result of that unearthly joy which old crones and dotards pronounce to be the infallible and fatal token of a doomed man.

The hour of parting at length arrived, and though while at the side of Berta the youthful sculptor felt loath to say good-night, yet the farewell once uttered, he was all impatience to retrace his steps, and ere he sought his couch to gaze once more on the drawing of his new patron. Though he viewed it with increased admiration, envy gradually found an entrance into his bosom, and whispered him that his reputation might be tarnished if it were known that instead of supporting the dignity of the artist, and exercising his own imagina-

tion, he had consented to become a copyist by adopting the ideas of another.

Actuated by these feelings, he was from that moment continually employed in designing and new modelling the subject; yet though the thought of executing it in the manner which he had almost promised became daily more insupportable, it seemed as if, for want of being satisfied with any production of his own, he should at last be compelled to do so. His creative powers appeared suddenly to have abandoned him; his ideas, which once crowded upon him, seemed to have fled at the moment when their presence was most needed; and instead of, as they were wont, answering his beck in bright and airy throngs, they now rose slowly and laboriously before his exhausted fancy. Yes, in spite of the study and meditation which he had expended upon them, every fresh sketch seemed more faulty than its predecessor. This wanted expression, that wanted grace; in one the figures were too stiff, in another they were unskilfully arranged; in short, strive as he would, the original design remained unrivalled.

Months passed away in this manner, and the commission of this patron, hitherto uncommenced, now appeared less likely than ever to be completed; for Berta, who had inherited from her mother a weak frame and delicate constitution, had latterly evinced alarming symptoms of a rapid consumption.

This circumstance was fatal to Giulio's studies. He felt that he should not long possess her, and anxious to soothe her by his kindness, and alleviate her sufferings

by his tenderness, he was unremitting in his attendance upon her, gratifying all her wishes and anticipating all her wants.

It was at the close of a warm spring day, that Berta, reclining on a couch, was left to the care of her afflicted and desponding Giulio. A small lamp burning before an image of the Virgin shed a tremulous light over the apartment, and the cool gales of evening, wafted through the veil-like curtains of the window, lulled her to that repose which her exhausted state required, but which had been denied to her by the oppressive heat of the day. While Giulio gazed on the pale and faded cheek which had but a few weeks before seemed to him the roundest and rosiest that ever gladdened the eye of an admirer, his heart sank within him when he reflected in how few and quickly-fleeting hours the frail and beauteous form, in which all his happiness was centred, would perish like its rivals, the sweet flowers of spring; and how that with her all his dreams of joy would pass away, and leave him to a waking as replete with woe as his visions had been with bliss.

By such agonising thoughts as these was his mind distracted and his whole frame agitated. His bosom swelled with the extremity of his grief, and the tears started to his eyelids; still not one sigh had he power to breathe, not one tear could he shed to relieve his sufferings and alleviate his distress. Careworn and heart-broken, with the attention of a nurse and the affection of a husband he bent over his exhausted Berta, whose mind, wandering in her sleep to the

recollection of those bygone moments when, made happy by the assurance of requited affection, their hearts were exchanged and vows of eternal constancy mutually plighted, she gained temporary strength from the excitement, and as she slept exclaimed, with all the energy of fondness, "And will you *always* love me, Giulio?"

What Giulio's sensations were when he heard that overwhelming evidence of affection few can tell. He felt as if at that moment the extremes of bliss and misery were centred in his breast; painful and terrible was the struggle which checked the involuntary expression of his feelings; a faintness came over him; stupor was rapidly overwhelming him; but the tears poured down his rugged cheeks—he wept—and in the midst of sorrow was comforted that the rest of the sleeper remained undisturbed. But the hour of his trial was not yet passed away. His mind, already tortured beyond the ordinary limits of human endurance, was destined to undergo still further suffering on the rack of blighted affection. While he yet wept and remained immovable through the weight of his affliction, his eyes wandered unconsciously round the apartment, and when they reached the wall whereon the shadows of himself and Berta were reflected, he was filled with horror at perceiving that the dark outline presented a surprising and fearful resemblance to the design of the stranger. Great and terrible was the shock which it gave him, and the overpowering impression that the hand of Providence had guided the mysterious events

of the last few months rushed upon his mind and harrowed it.

Horrified at this awful indication of his approaching destiny, consciousness gradually forsook him; and after a few moments spent in a struggle for mastery over his feelings, he fell senseless to the floor, and thus hastened the catastrophe which his distracted fancy had anticipated.

The noise of his fall, which brought her brother Giacomo and the nurse into the chamber, likewise awakened Berta, and the sudden alarm which it occasioned her brought on all the worst symptoms of her complaint to that degree, that Giulio was necessarily left unheeded, while their attentions were directed to the assistance of Berta; but in vain. She was seized with a violent fit of coughing, and the exertion proved fatal to her. Her frame, already attenuated by the rapid progress of the disease, could offer no further resistance, and the rupture of a bloodvessel placed her beyond the reach of mortal suffering.

Wonderful are the ways of Providence and the powers of human nature. Giulio, whose grief had hitherto been most immoderate, and whose returning senses communicated to him fresh causes for indulging in it, bore without a tear this sudden bereavement, and he, who a few hours before felt assured that nothing could afford him consolation under such an event, was able almost immediately to comfort and condole with her fond and unhappy brother. So true it is, that He who sendeth afflictions will enable us to bear up

against them, and will "temper the wind to the shorn lamb."

It was a sad sight, when a band of maidens, clothed in their funeral robes of white, bore the lamented Berta to her grave; and as they scattered flowers upon the coffin many of the spectators wept, and said, "Alas! death has cropped the sweetest flower in Florence."

Giacomo, loud in his grief, and exhausted by his continual lamentations, was obliged to lean for support upon the arm of Giulio, who proceeded with an undaunted step and an undimmed eye to the grave in which they were about to lay the remains of his betrothed. Many marvelled when they saw his placid demeanour; but none believed it to result from indifference or want of feeling; and though they knew not the cause, they felt assured that a sufficient one existed.

At the close of this imposing ceremony Giulio returned to his studio, as if to banish all recollection of his misfortunes by the resumption of his long-neglected pursuits, upon which he apparently entered with an increased enthusiasm, seldom quitting his retirement but when forced by the summons of a friend, and carefully excluding from it all his accustomed visitors. A settled and gloomy melancholy appeared to possess him; and as his friends saw from time to time how thin and emaciated he became, they regretted that he gave himself up to such incessant application. Early and late was he employed. The noon-day passenger watched him as he passed, and the houseless wanderer was cheered by the rays of his midnight lamp.

This was, however, a course which could not long continue; and it happened that Giacomo, who was an accomplished painter, wishing to consult him upon a point of art, was surprised by Giulio's not attending to the signal which he had given to such friends as he desired to hold communion with. The signal was twice or thrice repeated, and with as little effect as before. Giacomo, alarmed at the circumstance, called loudly upon him to open the door. "Arnolfo, my dear friend, I wish to see you; pray answer me. If you are too busy, tell me when you will be at leisure, and I will come again." Still he received no reply. Fearful of the cause of this continued silence, he applied his shoulder to the door, and succeeded in bursting it open. What was his astonishment when he beheld Arnolfo, resting his head upon his hand, apparently asleep, before a splendid and newly finished monument! He attempted to arouse the artist, but the icy coldness of his hand told to the terrified Giacomo that Giulio Arnolfo, the sculptor, slept in death.

At the foot of the monument, in which, though modelled after a drawing on the wall of the apartment, Giacomo speedily recognised the figures of his sister and Giulio, lay the open tablets of the latter, and in the first leaf was written:—

"To my dear Friend and Brother, Giacomo.

"By the love I bore towards your sister, by the esteem I bear towards yourself, I implore you to comply with

the last wishes of your dying friend. Let me be laid in the same grave with my beloved Berta, and place over us the tomb which, thanks to the blessed Virgin, I have lived to finish. As for the gold, the wages of death, expend it, I beseech you, in deeds of charity, and in masses for the souls of your ill-fated sister and friend. Fear not that its return will ever be demanded from you. He from whom I had it was no dweller upon earth. Farewell ; as you would have my spirit rest in peace, obey my bidding. Farewell.

“ G. A.”

The doubts which Giacomo might otherwise have felt as to obeying the wishes of his friend were however removed the evening before his interment. A stranger, enveloped in a large travelling cloak, knocked loudly at the door and inquired for Signor Arnolfo. Giacomo, irritated at the indecency of thus disturbing the house of mourning, hastened out, with the intention of reprimanding the intruder, but was checked by finding, in answer to his questions, that he was the mysterious visitor whose commission had been attended with such fatal results. Giacomo accordingly explained to him the unfortunate circumstances which had attended his former visit, and begging that the tomb might be applied agreeably to the wishes of the artist, offered to return the purchase money to the stranger, who, seemingly shocked at the events which had taken place, declined receiving it, and expressed great anxiety that it might be disposed of as the deceased had specified ; then bidding Giacomo a kind though hasty

farewell, he took his departure, and was heard of no more.

This monument, which was long visited for the beauty of its design and execution, and the interesting history connected with it, is however no longer in existence. In the year 17—, when the church in which it was placed was fired by lightning, it shared the fate of many noble memorials of the affection and skill of former times, which were then mingled with the dust they were intended to perpetuate; and in these pages remains the only record of *THE SCULPTOR OF FLORENCE AND THE STRANGER PATRON.*

THE ALDERMAN'S DAUGHTER.

MR. ALDERMAN STRUTT was the joy and pride of the Board of Solons who preside over the destiny of this great metropolis. He had been in office for several years, and had, soon after his election, shown talents as an orator and letter-writer which had surprised and delighted the Board, and considerably astonished even his oldest friends. Jabez Strutt had had few advantages in his youth, and though he early rose in the world, it was before the days that steam hod-carriers were invented. Through the various grades of the building business Jabez gradually passed, until, when not much over twenty, he started in a small way in business for himself. It was soon after this that he began to turn his attention to politics. Not that he was actuated by an intense desire to benefit his fellow-citizens, or that he had any theories of local government to advocate ; but that he saw there were many fat contracts which a man on the "inside" ought to be able to secure. So into politics he plunged, and he speedily evinced the possession of a great power which soon earned him the

confidence and trust of important party leaders. This power was that of keeping his tongue quiet. Naturally of a taciturn disposition, he was shrewd enough to see where his advantage lay, and he cultivated this quality until he became known as the most silent man in the city. He could be trusted with the most delicate jobs in the way of "wire-pulling," and never a hint of his purpose would be dropped before or after its execution. At the hostelry which he most affected, and where many of his political friends would gather round him, his conversation was rarely known to extend beyond the remark, "What'll you have?" But he said this so frequently that his companions always found him sufficiently entertaining, and never hesitated to pour their confidences into his ear. Jabez had a marvellous memory; he rarely forgot anything that was told him, and knew the weaknesses and desires of all his associates, and exactly in what way and for how much they could be bought. All the time he was building up his political influence he did not neglect his more material enterprises, and weighty contracts came his way very often. In some spare moment or other he found time to get married, though where and how it was done was a mystery to his friends. They joked a little among themselves about the form his offer must have assumed, and wondered whether he had sent in sealed proposals for the contract, or had walked up to the lady and said, "What'll you take? I mean, will you take me?"

Years passed on in their rapid course, till one morning

it was whispered around that Jabez Strutt's wife had died. Of course everybody went to the funeral and sent flowers. Not one-twentieth of the people present had ever seen Mrs. Strutt in life; but they felt called on to gaze upon her in death, and pretend to be much moved. If the demonstration did not do any good to the two real mourners, it at least served to enrich numerous florists and livery-stable keepers, two classes to whom the joys and sufferings of their fellow-beings are about equally profitable. It doesn't make much difference to them whether it is a good season for fashionable weddings or a bad season for a deadly epidemic. Flowers and carriages must be had. Even if we spend on flowers much more money than might have sufficed to keep the dead alive, if given in time, what does it matter? Everybody will talk about that beautiful cushion or broken pillar with your card on; but who would have known that you had given John Jones the money with which to get nourishing food, or paid his monthly rent, which was weighing heavily on him, or sent your own doctor to see if something more could not be done? And if the poor relative that is left will have to pinch and scrape for a year or more to pay that carriage bill, ought not she or he to be thankful that the deceased had so many friends who had been ready to follow him?

The attendants at the funeral of Mrs. Strutt were surprised at the great grief shown by a young girl of apparently about fourteen or fifteen, who came into the room with the chief mourner. In answer to numerous

inquiries, it was whispered around that she was Strutt's daughter, and this information was generally followed by the remark, "I didn't know he had a child." It was astonishing how little those who saw most of Strutt knew not only of his domestic relations, but about himself. The day following the funeral he reappeared in his old haunts, and nothing in his appearance—he always wore black—betrayed that anything had happened. But he almost paralyzed his friends by not drinking anything but lemonade, and this tribute of abstinence he maintained for a week.

About three years later Strutt's political superiors decided that he ought to hold office of some kind, and at the next election he was put up for alderman, and easily distanced all rivals. It was not long after he had taken his seat at the Board that he proceeded to astonish his friends and constituents, and the public generally, by throwing off the cloak of silence, and making a long and really good speech upon an important public measure. The newspapers commented freely on the fact that at last the City Fathers had got among them a man of some education and ability. Perhaps now, they said, there might be a chance of keeping greedy corporators in check, and of doing something with the quarrelling police commissioners.

There were even some optimists who suggested that perhaps Mr. Strutt might be able to achieve a reform in the Street Cleaning Department; but they little knew the tremendous difficulties of that Augean task. The other aldermen were at first a little wroth at the

fame won by the new comer, and one or two even contemplated means of competing with him. They thought of engaging secretaries, and having speeches written for, and taught to, them; but then arose the unhappy thought that they were already on record in the most common and ungrammatical way, and the change could not escape attention. Finally, they abandoned the idea, and resigned themselves to taking pride in their colleague's success, which, in some measure, was reflected upon them. And it was to the credit of Alderman Strutt that he never bored anybody. It was very rarely he spoke, indeed on only the most important occasions; but then his words were eloquent, and carried conviction. So, in time, it came to be an understood thing that, if a distinguished foreigner or citizen was to be received, Strutt should be spokesman for the Board, and that if a letter or address should be needed, it should be entrusted to him to prepare.

While the father was winning fame, the daughter, Florence, was rapidly growing into womanhood. She was a beautiful and attractive girl, upon whose care and education money had been lavishly spent. As Mr. Strutt's duties, in inquiring into the bibular tastes of his friends, prevented his accompanying his daughter into society, he secured the services of a widow lady, a distant relative of his late wife, as chaperon and companion. Naturally, Miss Florence attracted a great deal of attention and admiration, for, in addition to her charms of person, mind, and manner, she was almost certain to be a very rich heiress. The young lady

received with perfect calm all this admiration ; indeed, she seemed to take it as a matter of right, and was almost as imperious as a queen exacting tribute.

It was a long time before even the most acute observer could detect that she had any particular favourite, and then the difference was very slight. But the favoured object, a young lawyer named Wilson Hunter, was not slow to perceive the advantage he had gained, and which he had certainly earned by the most strenuous and persevering devotion. At last the night came when he could no longer withhold the explicit declaration of his passion. As a general rule, declarations of love are made after the sun has gone down. It may be that his glaring light is too strong for the first delicate shoots of the tender passion ; perhaps it is that love gathers force during the day, and toward midnight becomes too strong for further repression. The cynic might perhaps say that the intoxication of love not infrequently arises or is stimulated by the generous provision of dinner or supper at which exhilarating fluids are not unknown. Be this as it may, it was at a dance and after supper that Wilson murmured words of love to Florence, and found that they dropped into not unwilling ears. Of course she expressed great surprise ; what well-brought-up young lady could do otherwise ? No girl is ever able to see that a man cares for her till he tells her so !

Florence did not cut Wilson short while he was telling his tale of love, and her little interjections were not discouraging. But when he pressed for an immediate

answer, he could not gain one that entirely satisfied him. "Papa had to be consulted."

"Yes ; but if the Alderman is willing, may I tell him that you love me ?"

"I don't know. Perhaps I had better talk to papa. I can say more to him than to you."

"Oh, Florence—I may call you 'Florence,' may I not ?"

"Yes."

It was a feeble little "yes," but it was loud enough for Wilson.

"But, Florence, my darling——"

"I didn't say anything about 'darling.'"

"No, but I did."

"Yes, but you mustn't."

"Why not ?"

"Because it isn't proper—yet."

"I think it's the most proper thing I know."

"Don't, Mr. Hunter ; you mustn't do that."

"What ?"

"Put your arm there."

"Why ?"

"It isn't right."

"But engaged people always do that."

"We're not engaged—yet."

"You wouldn't mind if we were dancing."

"We're not dancing, Mr. Hunter."

"What's the difference ?"

"It makes a great deal of difference. In the first place there's the music."

"Oh, if the music makes it proper, I'll engage a band to go round with me; or stay, better still, I'll buy a pocket music-box, and set it playing whenever necessary."

"How absurd you are, Mr. Hunter."

"Don't call me 'Mr. Hunter.' I call you 'Florence.'"

"Yes, but I gave you permission to do so."

"And you are waiting for permission to call me 'Wilson.' You may do so, and preface it with all the endearing adjectives in your vocabulary."

"I'm afraid I haven't any."

"Then I shall teach you some. I have a splendid stock."

"I suppose you learnt them practising with some one else."

"No, dearest; I have never loved before."

"Have you seen 'Pinafore,' Mr. Hunter?"

"What an extraordinary question! Of course I have; years ago. Why do you ask?"

"There is something about '*never*' in it, isn't there?"

"But I mean it, Florence. I have had boyish fancies, naturally, but till I knew you I did not know what real love was."

"Here comes Mrs. Rogers," said Florence: "I suppose she thinks it is more than time for us to go."

Wilson made some muttered remark which, if he had had the power to execute his wish, would have been somewhat unpleasant for Mrs. Rogers.

"Come, Florence, it is time we were already home. I have been looking for you everywhere."

"Except here ; I have been sitting here, resting."

"Well, you can rest better at home, my dear."

"May we not have one more dance, Mrs. Rogers ?"

"No, Mr. Hunter ; we ought to have been home long ago. Miss Strutt has to go out to-morrow night, or rather, I should say, to-night."

"Well, I will get your wraps. Won't you take my arm, Mrs. Rogers ?"

And the knowing young man contrived to be very attentive to the chaperon, and to win some little favour in her eyes.

"Good-night, darling," he whispered, as he put her cloak round Florence.

"Good-night, Mr. Hunter."

"Say 'Good-night, Wilson.'"

"Good-night, Wil—son."

He never knew before what a pretty name he had. It is wonderful what a new effect voice and tone can give to a word which one has been accustomed to hear daily for many years. As Wilson put the ladies into the carriage, he said to Florence,—

"I shall call on your father in the morning."

Then he went home and tried to sleep, without, however, achieving much success. He was almost frightened at what he had done, for, though he was desperately in love with Florence, he did not at all like the idea of facing her father.

Next to being hanged or having a tooth drawn, the most unpleasant thing in the world is going to a father and asking for his daughter. The father is always

disappointed. Whatever your position and abilities, he thinks his daughter ought to have done better. Sometimes he is polite enough to keep his thoughts to himself, but more often he expresses them, and kindly begs you to excuse a candour which he says is natural under the circumstances. And then he proceeds to a delightful cross-examination which embraces your doings from the cradle to the present time, a brief sketch of your family history, and a minute description of your business or professional standing, and the prospects of its improvement.

It was about eleven o'clock on that morning, when, with faint heart, Hunter rang the Alderman's bell, and heard the information that he had not yet gone out. Hunter was ushered into the library, and allowed a few minutes to collect his thoughts before the Alderman appeared.

"Mornin'," he said, as he entered the room.

"Good-morning, Mr. Strutt."

Here the conversation came to a momentary pause, which was not oppressive to Wilson, as he filled it up with the business of hand-shaking.

"What'll you take?"

"Nothing, thank you; but if you can spare me a little time, I want to talk to you."

"How long?"

"I won't keep you more than a few minutes; but the fact is——" he hesitated.

"Go ahead."

"The fact is—well, you see, I——"

"Want money?"

"No, sir; the fact is—I love your daughter."

Wilson paused, in the hope that the Alderman would make some remark that would help him on. But no remark was vouchsafed. Mr. Strutt's face preserved its normal impenetrable expression. For all token of effect created, Wilson might as well have confided his secret to a brick wall. He stared blankly at Strutt, and then made another desperate plunge.

"Yes, sir; I love your daughter. It would be almost impossible to have seen her as frequently as I have, of late, without loving her. And I am bold enough to believe that I have been sufficiently fortunate to win her regard, at least."

"Hum!" This was a grunt that seemed at the same time to express dissatisfaction and incredulity. It was certainly not encouraging; still Wilson kept on as bravely as he could.

"I am sensible that I cannot at present offer her such a home as she has been accustomed to, but my business is doing well and constantly increasing. I have also a little property which brings me in about fifteen hundred a year. You know pretty well about me and my family. Now, sir, if I should be fortunate enough to gain Florence's love, will you consent to an engagement?"

"No."

It was a negative about which there wasn't the slightest shade of doubt or hesitation. Never was

unhappy young man's suit more bluntly denied.
"Why not, sir? Is it any personal objection?"

"No. I don't want Florence to marry."

"Not at all, sir?"

"Not, at any rate, before she is twenty-five."

"But that will be more than five years hence."

"Yes."

"That seems an age to wait."

"I don't ask you to wait."

"Will you permit an engagement?"

"No."

"You will allow me to see your daughter, I hope, sir."

"If she wants to see you, she can. I must go; some one's waiting for me."

He walked to the door, then turned and said,—

"If you'll take anything the bottles are there." He pointed to a chiffonier, and passed out.

It may easily be imagined that Wilson's reflections were not particularly pleasant. He had experienced about as decided a rebuff as it was possible to receive without the aid of physical force. He did not, however, have long to indulge in his sad reflections. The door was gently opened, and Florence put her head in.

"Well?" was all she asked.

"Ah, Florence! Come in, my darling. It is not well."

"What did papa say?"

"That he wouldn't let you marry before you are twenty-five."

"Why, then I should be too old to be married at all."

"Well, not quite ; but five years seem an age."

"I expected it, Wilson."

"Why, dear ?"

"I shall have to let you into a secret ; but as there is just a possibility of your becoming one of the family, I can trust you to keep it."

"You may, certainly, darling."

"There, that will do, Wilson ! Once is enough—in the morning ; and you have rumbled all my hair."

"Let me smooth it for you."

"No. Sit down ! This is business. Have you ever heard or read any of Alderman Strutt's speeches ?"

"Yes."

"They were clear, grammatical, and to the point, were they not ?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever read any of his letters ?"

"Yes."

"They had the same qualities, and were well written ?"

"Certainly."

"Well, when you heard the Alderman speak, it was *I* who was speaking. When you read his letters, it was my writing that you saw."

"I don't quite understand."

"I mean that I compose his speeches, and teach them to him ; that I write his letters and prepare his addresses."

"Why, Florence, what a clever girl you are."

"I don't think so. Of course he gives me his points,

though sometimes I won't have all of them. But I think for once I am going to prove myself cleverer than he is."

"How?"

"You will see. Take a pen and some paper, and write him again, proposing for my hand, and begging for an immediate answer, as you are compelled to leave town."

"I don't understand. What shall I say?"

"Begin with your sorrow at his refusal this morning, and ask him to reconsider his determination. Have you got that?"

"Yes."

"Then go on: 'I was unable to convey to you the full extent of the deep impression your daughter's many charms and graces have made upon me, or to describe to you what an utterly wretched and broken man I shall become if my heart's fondest hopes should be shattered.'"

"Isn't that a little flowery, Florence?"

"Not a bit too much. I know what will please papa. Now you must praise me. Say that I am—let me see, what am I? Oh, I know! Write, 'She seems to me the perfection of budding womanhood, combining beauty of person with beauty of mind——'"

Wilson paused for a moment in his writing.

"What's the matter, sir? Don't you agree with my sentiments?"

"Of course I do, dear. But it seems funny to hear you utter them."

"I know what will please papa. Have you got 'beauty of mind'?"

"Yes."

"Then add 'and of character; and whose natural qualities have been cultivated and strengthened by the care and attention you have lavished upon her.' Now you must say something about yourself. Let me see. Oh yes! Put this: 'I know I am entirely unworthy of her; that in neither appearance nor ability——'"

"Oh, come, Florence!"

"If you think you can manage it alone, all right. But you saw what you got from your interview. Now, I know what will please papa."

"Very well, darling; I hope you do. Please go on."

"'In neither appearance nor ability am I what she has a right to expect. But I am bold enough to believe that the blind god must have smitten her with some of his infirmity——' That's a good point, and will be sure to tell; papa always likes classical allusions. Now go on: 'His infirmity, which lessens my defects. and enhances my small merits.'"

"I don't see that you have left me any, Florence."

"Never mind; I know what will please papa. Now go on and say how much you love me."

"But there isn't room on the paper, Florence."

"Well, take another sheet. Stay! Perhaps it might bore him. You can write that to me. Tell him that if he thinks more favourably of your proposal there is no occasion to write, as you will take his silence as

permission to call here this evening as an accepted suitor."

"I don't understand——"

"You're not required to. You know you have just said your abilities are not what I have a right to expect. Sign the letter and leave it with me. Now you must go."

"What, so soon? I have hardly had a chance to speak to you."

"Papa may come back at any moment, and if he finds us together you may not have a chance to speak to me again for a long while. If you don't get an answer from papa, come round here at eight o'clock."

Wilson submitted very reluctantly to being turned out, but Florence was firm. She spent the remainder of the day maturing her plans, and when the Alderman returned home in the afternoon she had fully rehearsed her course of action.

Mr. Strutt found the letter on his library table. When he had read it—a task of some little difficulty—he sent for his daughter.

"Florence," he said, "I have had a letter from Hunter."

"Yes, papa. What is it about?"

"Hum! You can read it."

She took it and perused it carefully.

"It seems rather a well-written letter, papa, and he is very modest."

"Hum! 'Taint such a bad letter. Now, I want you to answer it for me."

"Yes, papa. Shall I tell him you consent, and that he may come here at once?"

"No, miss; nothing of the sort. You know well enough I won't consent. Write and tell him so clearly."

"Oh, papa, I can't."

"Do you mean that you love him?"

"Yes, please, papa."

"There's no 'please' about it. Do you think I've brought you up to be useful, in order to give you to the first booby who asks for you?"

"Mr. Hunter isn't a booby. See what a good letter he writes."

"Well, you write him just as good a one, telling him not to dare to show his face here."

"I never could do that, papa. I couldn't bring my own hand to deal the death-blow to all my happiness."

"Then I'll write myself."

The Alderman sat down and spoiled several sheets of paper. His writing was a marvel. At last he gave up the attempt.

"I'll send word to him not to come."

"He'll think it very strange you don't write."

"He'll have to think what he pleases."

"He'll never be satisfied with such a message. He'll come round for an explanation."

"I will give him one he'll understand."

"And break my heart."

"Nonsense! Now I want you to write me a speech, welcoming the Mayor of Boston, who will be here to-morrow."

"Oh, papa, I couldn't write a word; I am too miserable."

"Do you dare to refuse?"

"I don't refuse; I simply couldn't do it."

"This is a trick!"

"Oh, no, papa; but I am so wretched I don't feel as if I should ever have the heart to write again."

"I must have that speech."

"Get some one else to write it for you."

"And have it told all over town the next day. You ungrateful child, I've a good mind to turn you out of doors."

"If you do, papa, I'll marry Wilson at once."

"Will you write that speech?"

"I can't; I am so unhappy."

The Alderman was fairly cornered, and he saw it.

"Look here," he said, "if I consent to an engagement for a year, will you go on with your work?"

"I'll try to, papa, and I am sure I could help you after we were married. You won't know what to do with this enormous house, then. Perhaps I could persuade Wilson to make our home here."

"Hum! Guess it won't take much persuading."

"Shall I write to him, papa?"

"No! he said he'd be here this evening. But you can write me that speech."

"Yes, papa, dear. I feel so happy now that I am sure I can do an extra good one."

* * * * *

Wilson didn't get a letter, and when he called that

evening, the Alderman gave an unwilling consent. But Florence did not find much difficulty in atoning for her father's churlishness.

When Mr. Strutt left the lovers alone, it was after exacting a solemn promise that the marriage should not take place for at least a year. Florence asked Wilson if he would not consent to make his future home with his father-in-law, and the young man, after due and proper hesitation, graciously consented.

"I am sure I can't understand, Florence, how you worked such a sudden change," said Wilson.

When she had fully explained her proceedings to Wilson, he exclaimed,—

"You're the cleverest girl in the world. I should never have thought of that."

"I told you, Wilson, to write that your abilities were not what I had a right to expect."

THE SIGNAL.

I HAD occasion some time since to traverse a considerable portion of the Tyrol; not on foot, however, as such a journey ought to be performed, but in the diligence. Among the finest specimens of the picturesque I saw in the whole country was the Castle of Salurn.

I could learn very little of the history of this remarkable object. Salurn, it seems, was a *Ritterbourg*, or knightly castle, of some importance in the Middle Ages; but the immediate causes of its falling into decay are unknown. Neumaier von Ramszla, an old German traveller, says boldly that it was impregnable till stormed by spirits; when the family immediately took to flight. A later visitor, Professor Schubert of Erlingen, assures us in his "Wanderbuchlein" that he himself saw *something*. For my part, I saw nothing but old walls, most romantically situated; and I should have been very well satisfied to have attributed their dilapidation to the change that has taken place in the system of warfare and the habits of the people, had it not been for one of my fellow-travellers.

This person was a Bavarian, apparently of the

military order, and bore the marks of having been handsome in his youth. He was, however, much disfigured by hard service; and over and above a most ghastly complexion had a pair of eyes that no one could meet unmoved. When I inquired the name and history of the Ritterbourg he gave me a look which I shall never forget. Nay, he seemed to be on the point of speaking; but, glancing suddenly at our companions, he leaned back in his dark corner of the vehicle, where nothing could be seen but the glare of his singular eyes in the gloom.

Several times in the course of the journey to Botzen, where we were to rest for the night, my thoughts recurred involuntarily to Salurn. As we left the magical influence of the place itself, however, I was able to smile at the hold which had been taken of my imagination by the stranger, in connexion with the ruined castle. It is true, thought I, he is an elderly man, but he cannot be six or seven hundred years old; in spite of his remarkable eyes, he is not the Wandering Jew! He is old enough, however, to know something which may be forgotten by other people, and that may be interesting to a dreamer like myself. I will ask him to supper.

The invitation was given and accepted. We arrived at Botzen on a cold, dark, uncomfortable night. When entering the room appropriated to me, an object I encountered at the door still more unhinged my feelings. It was the representation, admirably well executed, of a corpse standing erect—naked, ghastly,

wounded, and dabbled with blood. From the cross and other peculiarities I perceived that it was one of those statues of our Saviour which are met with at every turn, both in and out of doors, in this part of the Tyrol. It was the first I had seen, and made my blood run cold with horror. The room was large, carpetless, floored with tile, and without fire. The rain beat against the casements, which rattled in reply. As the wind rushed groaning down the chimney, the flames of the candles wavered, forming *winding-sheets* innumerable on the white tallow. I wished that I had not asked the stranger to supper.

He came. He was a silent but not an unsociable man. He ate his supper without much speaking; and when the substantials had given place to walnuts and a bottle of Burgundy, he hemmed several times, and fastening his eyes upon me, awaited the signal which he knew was to be forthcoming.

"Touching this Castle of Salurn," said I, "and its history and antiquities."

"I know nothing of its history and antiquities," said he.

"You surprise me, sir!"

"Why so? I am indeed a sort of antique myself—but I am not the Wandering Jew."

"That is just what I was thinking." The stranger smiled. "I mean," continued I, "that I should not take you to be so very elderly a personage. But the truth is, I imagined, from a certain intelligence in your expression as we passed Salurn, that you could tell something about the castle if you would."

"You were right. My story, however, is a modern one ; and one that, connected as it is with my family history, and reviving recollections, some of pain and all of interest, I do not choose to recite in a public company. My visit to Salurn was attended, most unexpectedly to me, with circumstances of public moment : and as you appear to be actuated by nothing more than literary curiosity you are welcome to listen to a page of Tyrolese history." I apologized to the old man for my folly (discovering at the moment, as the warm hue of life was spread over his complexion by the effects of the wine, that his eyes were not so *very* remarkable), and requested him to proceed with his narrative, which I knew I should find, at least so I said, more interesting than all the ghost stories in the world. The following is, as nearly as I can recollect, the substance of what he told me.

My regiment was stationed at Trent from 1806, when the Tyrol was ceded to Bavaria by the Treaty of Presburg, till 1809, the commencement of the present war. This period, of three years, I number among the most remarkable in my life. The early part of it, however, was spent in the lassitude, both of mind and body, which garrison troops are so liable to fall into when they find themselves suddenly in a place destitute of the unmeaning nothings, which fill up the life of a soldier during peace, under the name of amusement. There were no balls, no dinners, no promenades ; the inhabitants were either less civilised in their recreations

than we of Bavaria, or even then their fit of sullenness had commenced, before they could point out a pretext for discontent.

We were in fact shunned—sent to Coventry, as the English say ; and it is not to be supposed that we received with any affectation of mildness the tacit insult. Some disorders took place not strictly in consonance with civil etiquette. The inhabitants no longer remained silent ; and instead of keeping aloof as heretofore, they closed upon us with somewhat too much familiarity : in short, a series of mutual aggressions took place, which kept the town in a perpetual ferment.

One day, in the midst of this anarchy, being somewhat heated with wine after dinner, it was proposed by two or three young officers to present ourselves uninvited at an evening party which we understood was to be given at a house in the neighbourhood of the town. In a perfectly sober moment I should have thought the frolic too boyish ; however, out we sallied, to the number of four, and took the way to the scene of action, laughing boisterously at the idea of a Tyrolese *soirée*. Sending in our cards, we followed upon the heels of the astonished servant, and speedily found ourselves in a room filled with apparently genteel company of both sexes.

The conversation stopped ; all eyes were turned upon the intruders ; and, after a moment's pause, the master of the house, bowing politely, asked us to sit down. This was a very unexpected reception. We had come prepared to find informality repelled by rudeness, and

after a little badinage with the "country girls" to get back to our quarters sword in hand. We indeed looked a little foolish, and had it not been for the good sense and readiness of one of my comrades—a young Frenchman—we should perhaps have slunk away as suddenly as we had entered. He apologised with great frankness, bemoaning the dulness of a garrison life, and imploring the ladies to mediate between us and the prejudices of their countrymen; and in a very short time we found ourselves as much at home as if we had come by invitation.

There was one of the ladies to whom I more particularly attached myself. She was very young, but possessed a splendour of beauty which constituted her the star of the evening, and entitled her to the exclusive homage of the senior officers. Dorathen herself did not seem to be displeased with her conquest, but on the contrary paid me every attention that was consistent with delicacy and good breeding; and indeed the whole party by degrees began to exhibit unequivocal symptoms of good humour and cordiality, with the exception of one man. This individual, whose name was Rusen, possessed not a line of the German physiognomy, but was evidently a decided Italian, although residing here in the confluence of the blood of the two races. His features were handsome, but his complexion singularly dark, and his eyes of a fierce and sinister expression, which contrasted strongly with the ingenuous blue orbs of Dorathen. The latter was evidently his affianced bride; and there appeared to

exist between them the kind of mysterious confidence which is usually observed among lovers.

By degrees, as my acquaintance with Dorathen increased, Rusen became first uneasy, then indignant, then cold and distant. Dorathen, who treated his frowns with almost contempt, became alarmed at his desertion, and put in practice a thousand familiar wiles to lure him back to her chair. Was not this like love? And yet I could read something in her eyes that told a different tale. There seemed to be nothing tender in her uneasiness; and once or twice I detected in her stolen glance an expression of fear rather than timidity.

The hour of parting came, and I requested permission to escort Dorathen home, understanding that she resided at some distance on the Botzen road. This was declined on the plea of a similar engagement with Rusen. The latter, however, although within earshot, would not hear. He did not stir from his place; the company had almost all left the house; and Dorathen, at last, with heightening colour, put her arm within mine and, calling her servant, we went out together.

The night was dark, and the way solitary. The servant walked before us with a lantern. Dorathen answered incoherently to my remarks; her thoughts seemed absent and perplexed. At last, suddenly interrupting me—

“Sir,” said she, “you are a stranger in this part of the country, and as a Bavarian the inhabitants imagine that they owe you no good will. For my part, I am

at home ; and am known both to the townsmen and peasantry ; I am under the protection, too, of a trusty servant. Return to your barracks, I entreat you—return speedily, and not too openly—and forget that I was ever so weak as to accept of a politeness which may cost you but too much !” She was agitated. She pressed my arm as she spoke, and her words came low and muffled, as if she dreaded that some one should overhear her. For my part, I was touched and interested. The intoxication of wine had passed away, and I felt that of love rising upon my heart and my brain. I attributed the fears to inexperience, and the natural timidity of a woman ; and continued, in spite of her entreaties, to enjoy my happiness.

On reaching her father’s house, all was dark. The family had retired to bed, and she tapped lightly on a window. The window opened ; and after whispering for a minute with some one within a coarse cloak and a peasant’s hat were handed to her.

“I entreated you to return,” said she, “while yet no disguise would have been necessary. You owe it to me now, were it only for the sake of my own peace of mind, to do me the small favour of throwing this cloak upon your shoulders, and concealing your military cap with this broad-brimmed hat.”

“What is it you apprehend ?” demanded I, in some surprise ; “the Tyrolese and Bavarians are now one nation ; we are not in war ; the clowns capable of forming opinion laugh aloud at their late Austrian constitution ; and even the peasants will soon get

reconciled to a government which demands nothing more than order and submission to lawful authority."

"There is no lawful authority," said the pretty rebel, "either in the sword or the pen—either in battles or treaties."

"In what then, for heaven's sake?"

"In the will of the majority of the nation."

"In the will of the majority of the nation! In the will of an ignorant and ferocious peasantry, who can neither read nor write, and who are equally unacquainted even with the geographical position of Bavaria and Austria!"

"I will not argue with you," said Dorathen, "on a subject on which we never can agree. I demand of you nothing more than a good night's sleep, and that is what you have no right to deprive me of."

"Alas, Dorathen," said I, "it would be in vain for me to make such a demand of you! However, I will not now dispute an authority which I hold to be more lawful than even that of the majority of the nation;" and, so saying, I equipped myself in the cumbrous dress she offered.

"Now, tell me," said I, seizing her hand, and bending forward to snatch the salute which I knew the custom of the country authorised on such occasions,— "tell me, Dorathen, are you engaged to the dusky Italian?"

"Yes—no,"—said Dorathen hastily. I closed her lips with mine, thus accepting of the negative.

I began to retrace my steps gaily. She was the most

beautiful and the most interesting piece of womankind I had ever fallen in with ; and, in a country like this, she seemed nothing less than an angel descended on purpose to reconcile me to life. My thoughts, however, were soon dragged down to earth by the difficulties of the road. I had no light to guide my steps, and the night appeared to become darker and darker. Trent, however, was in view, or at least its situation was indicated by some straggling lamps in the distance, and I stumbled on without apprehension. Presently I saw something against the dull sky which resembled the figure of a man ; but as it was without the accompanying sound of steps, I was in doubt. The figure vanished ; and I became convinced that it was something endowed with the faculty of voluntary motion—for there was not a breath of air had passed through the gloom. A few minutes after I was startled by a voice close to my ear.

“ Is it time ? ” said someone passing me from behind. “ Ay,—time to be in bed,” muttered I, catching by the hilt of my sword. The challenger passed on without rejoinder—and I confess I was glad of it, for the voice was that of Rusen. I was somewhat agitated, as you will allow the best soldier may be at the idea of midnight assassination ; and determining that it was no longer safe to keep the main road, I struck with as little noise as possible into a bye-path, determining to make a considerable circuit before venturing upon the highway again.

Whether it was owing, however, to my ignorance of

the localities, or to my imagination bewildering itself with speculations on the revengeful jealousy of the Italians, and the dexterity of the Tyrolese at the rifle, I knew not ; but in a very few minutes I had regained the road. There were some ruins, apparently those of a cottage, by the wayside, and before striking out into the valley again I determined to make use of the cover they afforded, to take an observation. Accordingly, with my drawn sword under my cloak, for I had no pistols, I crept along the walls, and endeavoured to find some point from which I could view the road both before and behind.

The caution with which I moved was highly necessary; for another step would have brought me into bodily contact with a man who leaned with folded arms against a corner of the ruin. I was surprised that even the little noise I made did not attract his attention, but this was soon effected by the same ill-boding voice which I had heard before.

"Is it time ?" said Rusen, passing—for I was sure of the voice.

"Salurn !" exclaimed the man, starting as if from slumber.

"Has he passed yet ?"

"No—on my oath ; not a mouse could have passed without my observation—far less a Bavarian."

"Let us go farther on then ; he cannot be many minutes longer, and the more distant we are from the town the better."

The confederates moved on ; and as soon as the

sound of their feet died away in the distance I stepped from my ambuscade upon the highway, and made as hasty a retreat to quarters as was ever effected by a soldier on foot.

The next day I learned that Rusen was a Veronese of considerable wealth and influence, who had settled in this part of the Tyrol for the purpose of carrying into effect some extensive manufacturing speculation. He was publicly known to be the accepted lover of Dorathen; although the lady's inclinations were supposed to be biassed more by political considerations than by dreams of matrimonial happiness. She, in fact, as report represented her, was rather an extraordinary character. Although quite a girl when her country was ceded to Bavaria three years before, she had distinguished herself as a member of what was called the French Patriotic Association; and had continued to throw every impediment in the way of the execution of the laws which female ingenuity could devise. I could hardly conceive that the Dorathen of this romance and my own was the same being. She had seemed to me to be the very beau ideal of gentleness and grace; and she had commenced her acquaintance with one of the *tyrants* by saving his life. It is dangerous for a young man, as I was then, to perplex his mind upon such subjects. My thoughts dwelt upon the interesting rebel till she became a part of myself, and at our subsequent interviews I had the happiness to find, or imagine, that I was by no means an object of indifference to her.

At first she made use of all the little arts of a woman to elicit political information, or to convince me of the iniquity of the government of which I was an agent. But by degrees she avoided such subjects ; it seemed to me that a feeling of regard for my honour began to mingle with her generous, though mistaken patriotism ; she became silent, melancholy, absent ; and at last she avoided my company so sedulously that there was sometimes a week between our meetings. The morose Rusen, in the meantime, whom I sometimes saw, had apparently become more reconciled to my rivalry ; and he even attempted, although in vain, to force his acquaintance with me into intimacy. This of course I attributed to political motives ; for although at that time we did not dream of actual insurrection, we were aware of the existence of a party hostile to Bavarian interests.

I was ordered to Botzen with a small escort party for the protection of some specie, which was to be transmitted by the way of that town to the capital. It was long since I had seen Dorathen ; and certain rumours of her approaching marriage, although I could not believe them to be true, gave me much uneasiness. Her late conduct indeed had appeared cold and capricious ; and the length of time that had elapsed since our last meeting was in part the effect of a fit of love-like sullenness into which I had fallen. I resolved, however, on the present occasion, since business would lead me past the door of her house, to condescend to enter, and afford her an opportunity for explanation.

In the first place, however—and I am ashamed to confess it—I was guilty of the boyishness of riding past the windows with my party, in the expectation of being called in. The manœuvre either being unobserved or misunderstood, I was fain to order my lieutenant to proceed to Lavis, and there wait for me ; and turning my horse I went leisurely back. Dis-mounting a little way from the house, I entered a footpath which conducted to the parlour door ; and finding the door open, and no servant at hand, I was just on the point of entering when arrested by the voice of Rusen.

“To-morrow night then,” said he, addressing some one in the room, “in the Castle of Salurn.”

“Agreed. But hark !”—

The voice which answered was Dorathen's. I know not what idea passed through my mind at the moment ; but in a few seconds I found myself again on horseback, and riding like a madman after my party.

We were far on our way to Botzen before I recovered my faculties sufficiently to reason calmly on what I had heard. The purposes of conspiracy, even did one exist, could scarcely be supposed to require the meeting of a young female with one of the other sex in a situation so wild and so remote as the Castle of Salurn. In the Tyrol there is plenty of waste ground in the neighbourhood even of the most thickly inhabited places for any reasonable secrecy ; and indeed, at the very moment when I heard the rendezvous appointed, the parties were, or imagined themselves to be, in the

most entire solitude. A meeting of mere love or gallyantry, in a place that the owls themselves must have been afraid to inhabit, was out of the question. At times I endeavoured to persuade myself that what I had heard was some nightmare creation of my own jealous brain ; but at all events I determined, in conclusion, in case any actual appointment had been made to be of the party.

On our return from Botzen on the following evening I halted my party in the village of Salurn, and ordering some refreshment for them and our horses, walked out alone on pretence of inquiring into the destinies of the weather. It was now dark ; and as I entered the wilderness of rocks on the side of the mountain, I found that their shadow brought on a premature night, which rendered it difficult for me to distinguish the path. The ruined fortress, however, was full in sight, towering far above my head ; and it was bright with the rays of the sun, that were altogether lost to the lower world. I had never seen this magnificent object so near, or in a light so well calculated to assist its effect ; and I lost some time in contemplating the remarkable scene.

I was startled from my reverie by the appearance of a little girl emerging from one of the innumerable creeks among the rocks, and running across my path. As she passed she threw a small piece of paper towards me from a handful she carried, and immediately vanished on the opposite side. On eagerly picking up the document, which, in the absorbing

selfishness of love, I imagined to contain a solution of the enigma that perplexed me, I found written on it, in the patois of the country, *S'ist zeit*, "It is time": was this the answer to the challenge of Rusen—"Is it time?" The affinity between the expressions struck me with a kind of panic, and I endeavoured, in startled haste, to recall to my remembrance what had been the appearance of the people as I passed through the country.

I recollected that I had observed, in the course of the day, various knots of peasants gazing into the waters of the Eisak; and that once, when a sudden shouting arose from one of the groups, it seemed to have been caused by the appearance of a quantity of sawdust floating down the torrent. The people, however, had dispersed to their homes as usual when the evening set in; and on leaving the village a quarter of an hour before no sign of tumult had been visible, and, indeed, no appearance of the inhabitants at all, except about half-a-dozen conversing behind one of the houses. These last were gazing earnestly towards the Castle of Salurn; and at this moment it struck me, but not at the time, as being strange that their attention should have been attracted so forcibly by so familiar an object. They appeared to be gloomy and discontented; and I heard one of them say, in the constantly recurring form of expression—"It is *not* time."

These things, even when put together, were too slight to amount to much; for even the words of the

written note, and its mode of delivery, might have referred to some festival of the neighbourhood. Nevertheless, an indefinite feeling of alarm began to rise in my breast, and I debated for some moments whether I should not return at once to my party. Love triumphed, however, assisted perhaps by curiosity; and I determined, since the way was now so short, to climb the castle rock before returning to the village.

The way was not so short as I imagined. Rock after rock was passed—sometimes scaled, and sometimes coasted round—and still the castle appeared to be as distant as ever. By degrees, the portion of its walls that was illumined by the sun grew less and less, and at last, as the light faded altogether, I could only recognise it by its outlines, faintly traced against the dull sky. Plunging on in desperation, I at length reached the base of the enormous cliff on which the castle is built, when there was only light enough to distinguish that I had thus far succeeded in my undertaking.

The grand difficulty now was to find the path, or stair, which led to the building above; and the search for this object led me nearly all round the rock, and wasted so much time that it became almost pitch dark. It is impossible to describe the state of my mind at this period. Independently of the struggle between public duty and private interests, there strangely mingled with my knowledge of the reality of the rendezvous between Dorathen and her suitor an idea that the whole was nothing more than a dream

and a delusion. As the night wind that had now arisen began to sigh among the cliffs, it seemed to me to convey a sound resembling marching; and when raising my head I half expected to see between me and the dim sky some grinning faces looking down in derision. In the midst of these absurd fancies, engendered by the strangeness of my situation and the loneliness and wildness of the place, I heard, with a distinctness that at once recalled my wandering senses, a human voice.

It was the voice of Rusen, and so near that I instinctively curved my fingers to return his grapple. The next moment, however, I remembered that he must be wholly unconscious of my presence, while I, on the contrary, might have expected him; and, coasting cautiously round a jutting point of the cliff, I endeavoured to steal unheard towards the sound. A gleam of light presently fell, although only for an instant, upon one of the rocks before me; and I conjectured that he was provided with a dark lantern. It had revealed enough of the locality to enable me to gain, without noise, a spot from which I could see the bearer.

Rusen was not alone. Two female figures stood near him, in one of which—notwithstanding that the only light was a reflection from the rock of the flame of the dark lantern—I recognised Dorathen. The whole three preserved a profound silence for more than a minute; during which they might have seemed to be a group of statuary.

"Hear me!" cried Rusen, at length, in a stern and almost fierce voice, "let us understand one another. I am no Tyrolese; I have no interest, real or sentimental, in setting this unhappy country in a blaze; but on the contrary, such peaceable schemes as mine can only flourish where public tranquillity is maintained under the safeguard of the laws. I well know the reason why your Association pitches upon me for this service. It is necessary for your success that I should be pledged beyond recall—that the weight of money, influence, and mercantile credit and solidity should be thrown into the scale. Be it so—I consent. But if I this night set in jeopardy my character—my fortune—my life—it is for your sake, Dorathen, in your cause and no other; and it is to you I shall look for my reward! Say but the word, not equivocally as you have hitherto done, for I will not be trifled with *here*, but openly, distinctly—say that tomorrow you will be my wife; and that instant I shall scale the rock and do—what is to be done."

It was some moments before Dorathen replied; but when she did so her voice was so low and tremulous that I could not catch a single word.

"She consents!" cried her female companion: "away, if you be a man!"

"I did not hear her," remarked Rusen, sulkily and suspiciously.

"I tell you she has consented—I am your witness." A stir took place among the speakers, but as the flame of the lamp suddenly disappeared I could not see of

what nature. My feelings were by this time excited to a pitch of frenzy. Everything that had seemed strange in the conduct of Dorathen was now accounted for. Her love—her hopes—her happiness—all were to be offered up with a blind but beautiful piety on the altar of her country. This was the high-place of the terrible superstition—this the moment of sacrifice! I rushed round the point of the cliff, hardly thinking of caution, and only anxious to interpose, I knew not in what way, between her and her fate. Her name was just about to escape my lips, as I groped for her in vain, when I felt my hand seized by some one in the dark. It was Dorathen herself!

“Forgive me!” said she, speaking quickly but distinctly—“in such moments it is only your sex that can be calm and resolute. I do not hesitate! At a time like this, love and hate are alike to me. The first man who reaches the Castle of Salurn is Dorathen’s husband! Away!” I looked up involuntarily, and saw the lantern gleaming like a star far above our head.

“Agreed!” said I in a whisper; and pressing her hand I sprang upon the stair. The steps were steep and rugged, being roughly hewn out of the rock; but, like a man walking in his sleep, I seemed to hit by instinct the proper place for my feet, and ascended with rapidity and safety. I neared the light, and my strength seemed doubled by the common tiger-feeling of our nature when within spring of a deadly foe. The path, however, became more difficult; all trace of hewn steps disappeared, and I imagined that I must have

wandered in my excitement from the track. The light, however, seemed to be stationary, not many feet above my head; and, although a considerable distance from the surface of the earth, as I knew that it could not have reached the earth wall, I conjectured that the steps in this place had really disappeared, through the effects of time and war, and that the climber was obliged to make one of the projecting points of the rock assist him in his ascent.

This I thought was rather fortunate than otherwise; for if the stair had been the only means of access, the struggle—for I knew that a struggle must come—would take place on the bare side of the steep. Endeavouring therefore to get round my enemy, and reach the brink before him, I pursued my way more slowly and more cautiously than before. When I approached near enough to the light to see the dim figure of the Italian, and gain some idea of the localities around him, I found that he was standing on a tabular piece of rock, which seemed to have been one of the landing-places of the ancient stairs. He was occupied in scraping out with his knife a hole in the side of the cliff that was choked up with sand and moss. This apparently was a place for the foot; for a very short distance above the stair recommenced with greater regularity than ever, and ascended till it was lost in the darkness.

The tabular rock proved to be indeed a landing-place, and the only point at which further passage could be effected. The cliff was properly smoothed

all round it in a manner that, before the invention of gunpowder changed the art of war, must have made the place defensible by a single man against a thousand. The operations of Rusen were just completed, and he was in the act of raising his foot to the hole, from which a slight effort would lift him to the stair above. I felt that I grew pale. The next instant I sprang upon the rock, and caught him by the throat.

"Jesus Maria!" cried he, returning the grapple, "Is it time?"

"Yes, it is time!" said I; and as the light of the lantern revealed my features to him I could see a gleam of mingled joy and terror light up his swarthy countenance.

"I arrest you as a traitor," said I, "in the name of the Bavarian government! Do you yield?"

"Yes—take your prize!" replied he, with a grin of mockery and a gripe like that of death.

"I arrest you as an intended assassin! Do you yield?" "No!" "Down then—first to earth, and then to hell! Die, dog, in your guilt!"—and with a painful effort I bent him down over the abyss, and at the same instant caught by the rock with one hand, to save myself from perishing with my victim. He yielded to the force which perhaps he could not at any time have withstood; and I thought for an instant that I held him suspended over the gulf, into which I could spurn him with my foot. In a moment, however, the wily serpent twined his arms round my legs, and dragged me down with him, upon the edge of the cliff. No situation could be more helpless than mine. Victory

indeed was easy, but only in union with death; and it appeared, from the frantic efforts of my enemy, that he himself was content to die, so that we died together.

I was deceived. The next moment he loosed his hold of my legs and threw himself on the rock, only clinging by the hands to the edge, till he had secured a footing below. This was instantaneously effected; and with what seemed to me the same motion he caught me by the foot, and dragged me over the precipice. I clasped him in my arms as I fell, and tore him from the rock. A yell of rage and terror burst from his lips. The providence of God interfered miraculously between me and what seemed inevitable destruction; for my strongly embroidered military jacket was caught in a point of the cliff, and I hung for some time helpless—and alone.

When I descended to the surface of the earth I found the two females hanging in distraction over the mangled body of Rusen, to the breast of which the lantern was still fastened and uninjured.

"Dorathen!" said I.

"You here! merciful God, is this a dream?"

"Yes—it is a dream which we must all forget. Away! *You*, at least, should have nothing to do with guilt and death."

She did not reply, but stooped down and unfastened the lantern from the dead body.

"Unhand me!" said she, in feverish agitation, "I have a sacred duty to perform. Since Rusen failed, I will myself undertake the adventure!"

"This is madness! You are not in a condition to act, or even to think at present; and I must charge myself with your safety. Come, let us leave this accursed spot, and speedily,—for I, too, have a duty to perform."

"What?" said she, with sudden animation, "to disclose the conspiracy of women, and send the Dorathen whom you affected to love to the scaffold?"

"No, by Heaven! not a word—not a look——"

"But there are other witnesses! The castle above contains a—a—paper, which I must burn to ashes, before I can sleep again in this world."

"I myself will do it. Give me the light."

"You! Oh, no—no—no!"

"Time presses—give me the light, Dorathen, I entreat—I insist!" She wrung her hands, and wept.

"Do you fear that I shall read the document, and betray your accomplices?"

"Yes, I fear it!" said she quickly.

"Shall I swear?"

"No!—promise on your faith—on your honour—on your love! The document lies upon a small box, on a table near the window of the tower. Promise that, without reading its address, without touching it even with your finger, you will set fire to it with this lantern and see both box and paper consumed to ashes. Do you promise?"

"I do, so help me Heaven!" I seized the lantern, and sprang for the second time upon the stair. I reached the giddy height of the castle without accident,

and ascended the crumbling staircase of the tower. In the highest apartment I saw the fatal packet, as described by Dorathen, and looking beyond it to the window, that I might not read the address, I fixed my eyes upon the dark valley below me, surrounded by its darker mountains.

I could not readily touch the packet with the flame of the lamp without looking, and turned my eyes for a moment upon the table. The packet had *no address*. A nervous tremor seized me at this instant, I knew not why; but the paper had already ignited. It blazed like gunpowder; and the fire communicating to the box a column of steady flame rose up. I overthrew the table in a transport of rage and terror, and trampled the fatal apparatus to pieces. But it was too late. The SIGNAL had been given! From every rock—from every mountain top, answering lights glared forth, like spectres in the night; the roll of the drum—and the shrill call of the bugle—and the thunder of artillery, entered through the valleys. That night the Southern Tyrol was lost to Bavaria!

I descended the rock, I know not how. I broke from the arms of Dorathen, and rushed like a mad-man towards the village. I arrived in time to see my brave fellows cut in pieces by the infuriated peasantry. Everywhere the cry resounded—*S'ist zeit—S'ist zeit!* It is time! It is time! I remember no more. When I awoke from a raging fever the Tyrol was again in the arms of its beloved Austria. Dorathen was my nurse. She is now my wife!

A ROMANCE OF THE ROAD.

BY HALL BYRNE.

“ON June 24th, at St. Mary's, Carlisle—John Brads, only son of John Brads, of Sheffield, to Sarah, only daughter of Mark Knowles, of ‘The Bush Inn,’ Carlisle.”

That Midsummer Day of the year 1836 is very deeply impressed on my memory. I am the John Brads, junior, alluded to in the above announcement of the *Carlisle and Cumberland Herald*; and on that day I was twenty-one years of age, became a partner in my father's business, and was married. I had been travelling for my father about two years, and though I was sent south, east, and west, as well as north, I very much preferred the latter journey, and made occasion to visit Carlisle more frequently than any other town in England. My father was some little time before he discovered the reason of this—the amount of business transacted in the old cathedral town hardly justified more than a passing call on the way to Scotland, and yet I was badgering the folks there for orders five or six days every month. The fact was that on my very

first visit I was caught, limed, caged. "I came, I saw, *she* conquered." Who was "she"? Sally Knowles, daughter of mine host of "The Bush." Oh, but she was a little beauty! I can't describe her to you, because she was indescribable. I might say she had large laughing black eyes, a mass of curly black hair, a skin as white as alabaster, lips which would tempt St. Anthony to kiss them, a dainty figure, tiny little hands and feet, and that she had not seen her twentieth summer; but all that would give you no idea of Sally Knowles as she appeared to me then. She had as many changes of expression as a kitten—now meek, now mischievous, now purring dreamily, now running riot in mad frolic. Her father idolised her; she was the joy, comfort, and help of her mother, who had much to see to in the busy, prosperous old inn—then the only posting house for miles round; and she was the friend, the tease, and the brains of her good-hearted, light-headed brother, who thought her the cleverest as well as the prettiest girl in the county. To me she was all she was to them, and more. It was "love at first sight" with me, and I think at second or third sight with Sally, though the minx would sometimes make me mad with jealousy. One morning I received a letter from my father, in which he said he had made a calculation of the result of my Carlisle journeys, which showed a loss of nearly £30 for the past six months; the old boy said he had plenty of faith in my judgment, and that, doubtless, I had good reasons for working the district so hard, but, to make

sure, he should come down and view the ground himself—perhaps his experience, added to my efforts, might conduce to a better result in the future. I was to order him a bed at “The Bush,” where he would arrive next day by coach. I showed his letter to my little darling, and then to her father, to whom I formally confessed my love, and vowed I should never be happy or do any good in my business until Sally was my wife. Poor old Knowles was very grieved at the thought of losing his daughter, but she coaxed and petted him till he promised his consent, conditionally that my father approved. The good mother had seen which way the cat was jumping, but appeared very sorrowful when the leap was taken; however, she, too, was won over to our side, and then this visit of my father, which I at first thought so terrible, appeared quite desirable, as bringing matters to a crisis. I had a clear day before he could arrive, and I worked hard among the people who by any possibility could or would give me an order, so that, partly by blarney, and partly by a half revelation of the state of affairs, I got together a very strong list, with which I hoped to put the “stern parent” in a good humour. I was busy writing out my “sheet,” when I heard the coach rattle up, and then the dad’s hearty voice asking if “his son, Mr. Brads o’ Sheffield,” were in. Then I heard Sally say, “Oh, yes, he’s in, and expecting you—any one could see you were his father. Here, James, take this gentleman’s things to No. 10. Will you step into *our* room for a moment? John said—I mean Mr. Brads said you were not to go into

the commercial room—he is *very* busy writing his orders.” “Oh! I’m glad to hear he’s *busy*,” said my father; “that’s a new sensation for him, I reckon. Well, little black-eyes, tell him his father’s arrived, and would like to see him *when he’s finished his orders*. Egad, I don’t think they’ll take him long!”

Here my little darling ran into the room where I was, and in tragic tones said, “Prisoner, come forth to execution;” then, changing her tone and manner, she sobbed out, “Oh, Jacky dear! I hope he’ll like me, go in and *make* him like me; I love to be loved, you know, and every one here *does* love me; oh! I do hope he’ll think I’m good enough, and pretty enough, for his ugly old son.” “It’ll be all the same whether he does or not,” I reply, stopping her mouth with a kiss; “but he *must* like you, he can’t help it. I’ve a capital sheet of orders here to appeal to his head, and with that in one hand, and you in the other, his heart will be won in a jiffy.” And so I entered the cosy bar-parlour, outwardly unconcerned, but with my heart thumping against my ribs as though it wanted to come out and speak for itself. “Well, John, my lad,” said my father, “I’m glad to hear you’ve been busy; has little black-eyes been helping you? So many orders, you couldn’t do without assistance, eh?” I thought I noticed a suspicion of a wink in my dad’s eye, as he looked towards old Knowles, and knowing that the good old chap could see as far through a brick wall as most people, I guessed that he had already learned my secret; so with a sudden resolve I blurted out, “Yes, father,

Miss Knowles is of such assistance to me that I feel I can never do anything without her, and I'm very glad you've come here as you have, because, although you *might* take my word on the subject, yet 'seeing's believing,' and when you've seen for yourself, and got used to her smile, her eyes, and her voice, and seen what a daughter she is, and what a sister she is, and what a sharp little business woman she is, I'm certain you'll agree with me that she ought to be a partner in 'our house.' You know, governor, you've promised the firm is to be John Brads *and Son* when I am twenty-one; well, that'll be next Midsummer Day, and Sally says she'll have me, and Mr. and Mrs. Knowles have given their consent, if you'll give yours. I'm certain I can never love any one else, and I shall work twice as well when she's my wife; just look at this sheet of orders, a specimen of what I shall *always* do, if I have her as well as you and myself to work for. I'm sorry I've kept you in the dark about it, but I was only really sure of Sally a little while ago—I thought she looked higher; there are heaps of fellows who would give their ears to be in my shoes, but, bless her, she has confessed that I, John Brads, only son of the best of dads" (I was bursting into rhyme as well as blarney) "alone possessed her heart; and now, governor, we only want your consent to make us the happiest pair of lovers in England."

This was the longest speech I ever made in my life, and it was delivered in rapid jerks to prevent my father cutting in with any cold-blooded objections on the score

of our youth. During its recital I had again noticed that little optical spasm in the dad's eye which was turned towards Mr. Knowles, and I now suspected that the old folks had broken the ground for me ; so, taking Sally by the hand and leading her to where my father sat, I said, "There, dad, I've had my say, here is the girl I love with all my heart ; look at her, isn't she a little darling ? If she joins my entreaty, I don't believe you *can* say no." The old man took her hand in his, and looking into her eyes for a moment, while his own filled with tears, said kindly, "Well, little one, what do *you* say ?" "Only this," she replied, tremulously, "I—love your son—and will try to make him a good wife, —and—and I hope you'll let me be a partner in the new firm." "That shall you," said my father, giving her a hug which half strangled her,—“and may God bless you both !”

Well, gentlemen, we were married, as per advertisement, next Midsummer Day. All Carlisle was at the wedding, and we had a grand breakfast at which even the Dean assisted, for the Knowleses were greatly respected. It was not the custom in those days for young couples in our station to spend either time or money in honeymoons, but it had been arranged that we should just have a week's tour in Scotland before settling down to the cares of housekeeping.

One of the best appointed post-chaises which "The Bush" could turn out was being prepared for us while we were at breakfast, by the help of which we could travel at our own sweet will. I was glad when the

breakfast was over, for I longed to be alone with my pretty little wife, whom every one was finding excuses to kiss. The carriage was at the door, and the horses pawing the ground as impatient to be off as I was. Dick, the sharpest and best-looking postboy on the road, was surveying the turn-out with a quiet air of proprietorship. "Woa, then ! steady, my lass," cried he, as the off-side grey pricked up her ears, and plunged—seemingly desirous of distancing the wheels it heard behind. The sound which startled the mare proceeded from a post-chaise which came toiling on, and presently drew up behind ours at the door of "The Bush."

Before the postboy had time to dismount, a handsome young fellow of two- or three-and-twenty sprang out, followed by a lady closely veiled, and both entered the inn. There was confusion in the passage, for Sally had just come downstairs, and was taking weeping leave of her parents—while all the servants, from the solemn head-waiter down to the youngest scullerymaid, were jostling and crowding to get a look and a smile from their young mistress.

The stranger seemed to take in the state of affairs at a glance, and an expression of impatience passed over his face ; it was but momentary, however, and, consigning his fair partner to the care of Mrs. Knowles, with a whispered reminder that they must start again in a quarter of an hour, he apologised for breaking in upon such a happy occasion—all he wanted was a fresh pair of post-horses, *immediately* ; he had business of great importance ; let the horses be the very best and

fastest in the stables. Here old Knowles came forward and begged the new-comer to step aside with him for a moment. Then, having sent the servants to their respective quarters, by assuring them we should not start without saying good-bye to them, and begging the guests to return to the breakfast-table, he addressed the stranger thus : " Excuse me, sir, but before I let you have my horses you must assure me on your honour that "—and he hesitated for a moment—"that all's straightforward and above-board between you and the young lady upstairs. You see, sir, I can guess pretty well where my nags will be taken—they go that road so often they hardly need a postboy ; but once or twice I've got into trouble—had lawyers' letters, with jargon about minors, and wards in chancery, and such like, you know. Are you pursued ? " Again the flash of impatience on the young gentleman's face, and he exclaimed, " Confound it ! yes ; " then turning round and seeing Sally and me, he said, " Can I speak one word with you in private ? " " Oh ! " replied Mr. Knowles, " you needn't mind speaking before them, that's my daughter and her husband, barely an hour married themselves," and the old gentleman gave me a wink. " Well," said the young fellow, " I haven't a moment to lose ; here is my card, and I give you my word of honour that, although we are pursued, it is no legal penalty I am incurring—only—only—but I cannot explain ; they'll overtake us and spoil everything." Then, turning to Sally, he said, " I'm sure *you'll* befriend us, and help to make me as happy as you

have made your husband. Please go and speak to the young lady above stairs, and then come and tell your father if he should hesitate to let me have his horses." Sally flew upstairs, and young impatient, addressing me, said, "I suppose that carriage at the door is yours?" "Yes," I reply; "we are going on a little wedding trip into Scotland." An idea seemed to strike him, and he continued, eagerly, "How far is it from here to Gretna? could not you lend me your carriage and horses while mine are being got ready? We could be a mile or two on the road. I ought to be ashamed to ask such a favour of a stranger, but, you see, my need is pressing;" and he added, with a smile, "*You* are safely married, and an hour's delay on your journey is of less consequence to you than to me, who expect every minute to see our pursuers—the young lady's aunt and some fiery fossil of an old admiral, whom she has persuaded to accompany her. Neither aunt, nor admiral, nor the dev—the whole world shall ever part us; but I don't want a scene." Here Sally rejoined us, and in less than a minute had conquered her father's scruples; whispered me that I was to let the runaways have our carriage; had given orders to have the luggage of each chaise transferred to the other; and then, dashing upstairs again, had returned with the young lady, whom she handed to her lover, and then hurried them into our carriage; beckoned next to Dick, whispered him to drive fast to Gretna, and gave him a guinea over and above what he would get from the young gentleman. Before any

one else had properly taken in the situation, Dick was in the saddle, and the horses were off at full speed.

"Now," said my little rebel, "I'm ready; we'll have a fresh pair of horses, Jacky dear, and take *their* carriage and their postboy, and, I hope, be pursued by *their* people—won't it be fun?" The old folks begged her to wait until the pursuing carriage should have passed, but the minx was determined. "What! thwart me on my wedding day? unnatural parents; come along, Jacky boy, come and be chased." Well, gentlemen, there was no resisting her, and indeed *I* had no wish to, for I was almost as ready for the "fun" as she was; so fresh horses were put to, and we arranged that the postboy should return with his own horses so soon as we knew the runaways were married. Then we said our good-byes, and drove leisurely towards Dumfries. We had got about two miles on our road, and Sally had told me what she had learned from the young lady—viz., that she was running away because her aunt, who was her only living relative, wished her to marry the son of the admiral, who accompanied her; this son was hateful to her, and only loved her money; her lover, with whom she was now speeding Gretnawards, was her own heart's choice, the younger son of a lord, and a captain in the Guards. When Sally had told me this much I heard the sound of wheels and shouting.

"Now for it, Jack; tell our postboy to keep in the middle of the road, and not to hurry; there isn't room for two carriages abreast here, and so we can give the

others more time." I did as I was desired, and we slackened speed almost to a walk. Soon we heard the admiral shouting to our postillion, "Hullo, there! stop! d'ye hear, you rascal? Stop! or I'll have you put in prison."

"Oh," said my little imp of mischief, "this is glorious! Jack, put your head out of the window and talk to him; the young lady told me that neither her aunt nor the admiral has ever seen her lover, so they won't know you. Talk gently to him, Jack; tell him he'll strain his voice." "You little rogue," said I, and gave her a hundred kisses. "Hullo!" again shouted the admiral, "heave to, you villain! I've half a mind to put a bullet through you." Then I put my head out of the window, and saw that the pursuing carriage was immediately behind ours. The admiral's postboy was on the broad grin, and seemed to be enjoying the old gentleman's rage, who, when he saw me, shook his fist, and exclaimed, "So, my gentleman, there you are, eh? You thought you'd get to Gretna before you were missed, did you? but you're mistaken, sir! you're done, sir! and you must restore the lady to her relatives, sir! and go home with your tail between your legs, sir! and very soon, sir, you will read in the *Post*, sir, that she is married to somebody else, sir! —somebody *else*, do you hear? Now, sir, you'd better stop at once, and hand the lady over to her aunt, who is here in this carriage, and think yourself lucky if you are not prosecuted for abduction, sir!" Here the admiral withdrew his head; his efforts must have

well-nigh choked him, for the roads were dusty, and our wheels raised a cloud for the benefit of his throat and eyes. He was a choleric old fellow, I could see, accustomed doubtless to have his orders instantly obeyed, and this sort of stern chase, where he could fire no other gun than that of his enraged speech, was tantalising to him. Presently his head emerged again, and I think he had been washing the dust down his throat, for his voice was less husky, and more emphatic, as he shouted, "Now then, you robber, you shark, you ropeladder thief, are you going to stop? Don't think you are going to be married, you're not; we shall be present to forbid it, and that scoundrel blacksmith dare not marry you if we forbid, so you may as well stop at once. Here, you postillion," he shouted to his man, "push past that robber's carriage, get in front of them. *I'll* stop their Gretna trip then, they'll have to ride over my dead body first; pass 'em, I tell you—get in front of 'em!" "Can't, sir," I heard the man say, "there ain't room." Here I could not refrain from laughing, which increased the admiral's passion. "Drive your pole into their back," he screamed—his face now purple and distorted; "make 'em bring to; you shall laugh the wrong side of your face presently, my young jackanapes! By the Lord, I wish I had you at sea; you should have a round dozen, you grinning monkey, you——" Something terrible would have doubtless followed, but again the dust was too much for him, and we rode another half mile before he could resume. Hitherto, I had not been able to get a word in; but

presently, at the bend of a road which led into one of greater width, I heard the admiral again urging his man to get in front of us, and but for the sharpness of our fellow this would have been done, but he, having been engaged by the runaways, had all his sympathies on their side, so he dexterously swerved his horses across the road, and narrowly escaped the entrance of the other carriage pole into our window. Here I put out my head, and enquired if the postillion were drunk, and what the admiral meant by giving orders to run into us. "What is it you want?" I said, mildly. "You can't prevent *our* marriage, I assure you; you'd better arrange with the lady you have with you, and give the blacksmith a double job." "Oh, indeed, sir! *indeed*; you can afford to be merry, can you? We shall see. Ha, ha! *we* shall see." The old fellow's laugh was about as ferocious a specimen of hilarity as I ever heard. "Drive past 'em, you block-head!" he continued to his man, "a guinea if you get in front of them in ten minutes." "Jack, dear," said Sally to me, "let the man earn that guinea presently. Our Dick has got them to Gretna by this time, I know, and we ought to turn off soon for Dumfries."

After a hug and a kiss, I watched for the next disappearance of the admiral's head, and then told our man to let the other carriage pass us. Accordingly, we soon heard a great smacking of whip, and saw the pursuing carriage dash by us at a gallop to where the broad main road branched into two narrow ones, and draw up across the one which a finger-post proclaimed

led "*To Gretna.*" "Stop!" said I to our man, and he pulled up his horses. "Now, Sally, we'll give the lovers ten minutes more grace, and then we'll leave this old firebrand to do his worst. I'll go and talk to him for a spell; do you stay here, and for the present don't show your pretty face." I then jumped out and was met by the admiral, beaming with triumph. Tossing his man the promised guinea, he said, "Well done!" "Now, sir, how about your marriage? We can't prevent it, eh? I told you we should see. Now, sir, confess the admiral carries too many guns for you, and hand over your prize to her rightful owner." He was advancing to the door of our carriage, when I said, as seriously as I could, "Stay, sir! by what right do you dare look into my carriage?" "Oh! by what right? *he* talks of 'right'! Ah! I see; you don't recognise me in the matter, eh? you must have the legal representative, must you? Well, sir, you shall be gratified. In *my* carriage, sir, sits the aunt of the young lady whom you have abducted, perhaps you will allow her to peep into your would-be bridal carriage. Madam," he said, opening the door of his own vehicle and addressing its occupant, "will you be so good as to satisfy this gallant, and come and claim your niece? he disputes my authority." An elderly lady of vinegar aspect descended, and was led by the admiral to our carriage door, then, addressing me in tones every bit as acid as her facial expression, said, "I desire you, sir, to restore to me my niece, whom you have clandestinely and dishonourably abducted." I made my

best bow, and said, "Madam, I really was not aware that the young lady in this carriage was related to such distinguished people as I see before me ; moreover, granting that you are her aunt, I cannot consent to 'restore' her, without asking if she is willing to be so restored." "Sir!" she replied, in stately and freezing tones, "my niece is a minor, and, legally, without will of her own. Again, I insist that you immediately restore her to my charge." "Well," I reply, reluctantly, "at least you will allow her to proclaim to you and this gentleman that there has been no such thing as forcible abduction—the young lady has done me the honour to accompany me of her own free will and choice." "I doubt not, sir, that you may have alienated my niece's sense of duty, but as we have been so fortunate as to rescue her from a hasty and ill-considered marriage, she will soon recover from the folly of a mere sentimental and misplaced attachment."

"I am sorry," I reply, "to have produced such an unfavourable impression, and if, as you say, the young lady's attachment to me is merely sentimental, misplaced, and ill-considered, she has but to say so, and I will renounce my claim to her for ever." The aunt was about to speak, when Sally let down the window, and, with the meekest lamb-like expression of innocence, said, "Jack, dear, why are we stopping? Is there anything wrong with the horses?"

In these days, gentlemen, the effect produced at the above juncture would be curtly described as "Tableau!"

The "tableau" was formed as follows :—In the foreground was Sally's kitteny mischievous face framed by the coach window. The aunt, with hands uplifted and gasping for breath, almost fell into the arms of the admiral, who was strangling some nautical naughty words, and choking in the operation. I, very much amused, yet somewhat nervous lest the excitement and passion of the old man should lead to some fatal result ; and the two postboys in the background keenly enjoying the scene.

The aunt was the first to recover speech. "What does this mean, sir?" she said, addressing me; "where is my niece?" "Why, madam," I reply, "you asserted just now that she was in this carriage; I thought there was some mistake, because there is but one lady there, the one you see, and that lady is my wife!" Then turning to Sally I said, "My darling, is the lady related to you, and do you really wish to leave me so soon?" "Whatever are you saying?" said Sally, with such bewitching affectation of astonishment that I nearly laughed outright; "I never saw the lady before in all my life." Here the admiral came close to me, and spreading himself like the eagles on the sign-boards, blurted out with terrible vehemence (the more terrible because of his struggles to confine himself to land expletives), "Now, sir! you've *me* to face. There's some (gulp) roguery here. Answer me. No, wait a minute," and he rushed to our postillion, whom he dragged to where we were standing. "Now, you rascal," said he, addressing the man, "didn't you

bring this (gulp) carriage, with a lady and (gulp) gentleman inside, from York, this morning? Answer me truly, you (gulp) scoundrel, or, by Heaven, I'll have you hanged to the yardarm!" "Weel," said the man, "a' doan' think it's a hangin' matther izackly, but ah'l speak truth all same, a' did bring a yoong leddy and gen'l'm'n frae York this mornin' in this ere po'shay, an' a prattier yoong leddy an' a nicer yoong chap a' never see." "Well," cried the admiral, "and where are they now? Answer me quick, you —— (gulp), and don't stand grinning there."

"A' can't tell ye that," said the man,—“not for sartin, but a' can guess—a' can guess.”

"You can guess?" screamed the admiral; "then tell me instantly where you *guess* they are."

"Weel, a' guess they'll be hereabouts varra soon, man an' wife. Yon blacksmith dinnot tak' long ower his work, a' ties 'em oop sharp an' sure, a' do. Ye see my 'orses wor joost dead beat at Carlisle, so the yoong gen'l'm'n he borrowed a fresh pair an' changed po'shays with this gen'l'm'n 'ere, an' a' moost say a better pair o' 'orses a' niver see; them there 'orses 'd do their twelve mile 'n 'our wi'out sweat'n a 'air, that they would. But look 'ere, see, 'ere they coom—an ahl bet any one a glass o' grog them 'orses ain't turned a 'air."

We all looked in the direction the man pointed, and there, sure enough, was *our* carriage coming at a smart pace; in another minute it drew up, and Dick's voice was heard shouting, "Now then, you fellows, just pull o' one side, will ye?"

The two men from York were at their horses' heads in an instant, and made way for the returning carriage, but the little admiral planted himself in the middle of the road, with his arms akimbo, and in a voice shrill with passion cried out, "STOP ! drive one inch farther at your peril !"

"It'll be at *your* peril if you don't clear the road," said Dick, driving his spurs into the horse he was riding. The animal plunged, and the admiral darted nimbly on one side. As the carriage was dashing past us, Sally called, "Stop, Dick !" Seeing his young mistress, Dick drew up instantly, and the young gentleman leapt from the carriage. His face was beaming with delight and excitement ; giving a hurried glance at the group around him, he raised his hat to the old lady, and said, "Pardon me, my dear madam, your niece has preferred giving her hand where her heart was already given, and she is now my wife. Admiral," he continued, turning to the fuming old sailor, "I'm sorry for the trouble you've had ; why didn't your son give chase himself, eh ? It's too late now, but let me introduce you to my wife, and perhaps you'll do us the honour to join us later at Dumfries." Then addressing Sally and me, he said, "I owe you both a debt of gratitude I can never repay ; accept the warmest thanks of my wife and myself, and I hope we may be better acquainted." Sally ran to the door of their carriage, and was kissed and thanked by its fair occupant. The admiral seemed stunned, and gazed despairingly at the aunt, who maintained a stony glare

of enraged disappointment ; recovering himself, however, he shook his fist at the postboys, who were all three grinning their satisfaction, and then turning to me he said, or rather yelled, " This is *your* doing, sir ! How dare you, sir ! Who are you, sir, to come between this lady and her runaway niece ? What do you mean, sir ! you shall smart for this, if there's law in England ! Who *are* you, sir ? what's your infernal name ? " " Give the gentleman a circular," whispered Sally to me. I drew one from my pocket, and handed it to the admiral, who, while fumbling about for his eye-glasses, was snorting, stamping, and chafing like a madman. " Allow me to read it for you," said I—" ahem !

" '*JOHN BRADS & SON.*

" '*June 23rd, 1836.*

" '*Mr. John Brads, Hardware Merchant, Vulcan Works, Sheffield, begs to inform—'*"

" Curse you," interrupted the admiral, " do you mean to tell me that you are a tinker ? "

" No, sir," I reply, mildly, " I'm the son of Mr. John Brads, mentioned in the circular, and if you had allowed me to proceed, you would have learned that I am this day admitted into partnership, and that the firm will henceforth be ' John Brads & Son.' May I hope to be favoured with your orders for anything in the iron or brass way—from a ship's anchor to a candlestick ? Will you take a card, sir ? "

“ May the plague seize you ! ” said the admiral ; then turning to the old lady, “ Madam, we are foiled. I presume you do not desire further intercourse with that ungrateful girl yonder, her repentance will come soon, rely on’t ; let us return ; ” and with another nautical blessing hurled at me, he handed the old lady to their carriage, and returned to Carlisle.

The runaways, and Sally and I, continued our journey to Dumfries, where next day we exchanged vehicles and parted company.

It’s nearly fifty years since it happened, but every incident is as fresh in my mind as though it were but yesterday. That young officer is now the Earl of —, and Mr. and Mrs. John Brads are always welcome guests at Kirkham Towers.

A CASHMERE ADVENTURE.

BY LT.-COLONEL ANDREW J. MACPHERSON.

IF you could have peeped into the coffee-room of "The Rag" on a certain drizzling afternoon in the month of February 18— (a red-letter day at Aldershot), you would have seen it full of the flower of our Army, with just a sufficient seasoning of veterans to take the edge off the spring-tide of animal life, and to give a neutral tone to the vivid predominance of dash and animation.

At a table just inside, and to the left of the door, sat four men, who had apparently finished lunch, and were in that happy frame of mind which bodily wants amply attended to induces.

One was a bronzed greybeard—he evidently had seen service in other lands ; the others were of the rising generation, stamped unmistakably with the well-defined professional Hall-mark. Their bearing indicated a loyal deference towards the senior in age and standing, to whom, light-hearted and sociable, though old in years, one might justly apply the French proverb, " On à l'âge de son cœur."

Chatting on everlasting shop and the current topics of the day, the conversation had begun to flag, when—

“Did you ever hear, you other fellows,” said Stewart, the youngest of the party, “of the Colonel’s scarecrow ; a something he met with on his travels in Cashmere ?”

“Pray do tell us the story, Colonel.”

“Story ! God bless you ! I have none to tell ; but let us adjourn to the smoking-room, and perhaps I may divulge what certainly at the time gave me a start, though not naturally nervous ; even now the bare recollection gives me a qualm that needs an S.-and-B. ; so come along, my boys, for a pipe and a retrospection.”

The brethren-in-arms were soon seated in a snug corner of that snuggest of all smoking-rooms around a small table. The Colonel received his mixture at the hands of the attentive waiter, and having filled and lighted his pipe, was soon enveloped in clouds and lost in thought, while his companions, following his example, were silently smoking in eager, new-born anticipation of the promised incident in the life of the Colonel, who, having sufficiently chewed the cud, broke the silence—

“What I am about to recount may pass away the time ; you alone are to blame for exciting my garrulity, and must bear the consequences.”

“Drive away, Colonel, please ; we are all at attention.”

“In the spring of 1856, before the great Mutiny had transformed India, our regiment was quartered at Peshawur, a far-away station near the Khyber Pass, the hottest of all Indian stations in the hot weather. I had been some time in the service, and for a quiet man

was fairly popular with my comrades, some of whom distinguished themselves so gallantly in the trying time which followed.

"About the middle of April, when the heat was just beginning to make itself felt, I was fortunate enough to get sixty days privileged leave, which I determined to spend in Cashmere. If any of you fellows have been there, you will know what an earthly paradise it is; if you have not, I fear I can do but scant justice to its countless beauties. It being my first visit, I took counsel as to kit, etc., with old stagers, one of whom, I well remember, strove to impress upon me the absolute necessity of imbibing a strong dose of Exshaw's brandy, to take the tremor out of my limbs ere making a venture to cross the river on the 'Jhula' (a dangling bridge of ropes) stretched at some height over the roaring, whirling torrent, requiring no ordinary amount of steadiness and nerve to traverse. My mentor, poor fellow, has long since taken the quiver out of his own legs for ever; may he rest in peace."

Here the Colonel meditatively shook the ashes out of his pipe, loaded, and lit again.

"Pardon, gentlemen; I was thinking of an old comrade. There are but few of us now left of a once jovial band. War, climate, and Anno Domini have been unusually busy, and most of my restless companions of yore are now asleep; their names appear no longer on the earthly muster-roll.

"Waiter! yes, another, if you please?"

"One morning, a few days before that of my

departure, I was taking my accustomed ride after morning parade, and while cantering in the neighbourhood of the Peach Gardens heard a sharp, loud cry for help. Urging my horse forward to a full gallop, I made for the spot whence the sounds came, where I saw a group of Budmashés struggling together, in the midst of whom, a captive or hostage, was a beautiful young native girl of about sixteen years, plainly dressed in the simple costume of her country, but from whom the struggles of the moment had torn the veil which always hides the loveliness of the high-caste native woman from alien eyes. I never knew how the quarrel began, or what was the object of the strife; I only knew that I dashed forward into the midst of the group, firing the revolver, which happily I had with me, with perhaps more energy than precision, and that in less than a minute the men had decamped, leaving me, like a genuine old world knight, the successful champion of beauty in distress. A difficulty, however, was now before me. The beautiful creature who had so suddenly and unexpectedly fallen upon my hands could not speak a word of English, and I was equally ignorant of her dialect. The embarrassment of the moment was extreme, and I could not but reflect that it was sometimes far easier to secure a prize than to dispose of it afterwards. A sudden thought came to my rescue.

I remembered that almost within sight of that very spot was the home of a worthy German missionary, with whom I had scraped acquaintance through a mutual fondness for the game of chess. To despatch a camp-

follower who had been attracted by the sound of the shots for my old friend was but the work of a moment, and, thank Heaven, to bring him upon the scene was but the work of another. The worthy missionary had no difficulty in making my fair prize understand him, and when she looked up as he questioned her I thought I had never seen a more beautiful face or a more fascinating expression. I was a young man then, you know, as young and almost as foolish as some of you are, and I am afraid I must confess that my captive had enslaved me. The girl, whose name was Motee, was easily induced to accompany us to the missionary's house, where she was placed under the care of his wife, until inquiries could be made concerning her; and I returned to my quarters. It wanted now but ten days to the time of my departure, and speaking at this distance of date I should not like to say whether it was from my interest in the beautiful girl I had rescued or from my desire to finish a chess tournament, which I had begun with the old missionary, that I found myself spending the greater part of these days at his house. I only know that I went down each time to conclude the chess match, and that to this day it remains unfinished. I saw very little of Motee alone; my old friend was too wise and good not to view with some anxiety the possibility of my taking a step which I might have occasion to rue for the rest of my life, to have any compunction in playing gooseberry on all occasions, and it was not until the night before my departure that I

gained a few moments with her by herself. We had neither of us made much progress in the other's language, but eyes can speak in any tongue, and sighs need no interpreter. All I need say of this is that we exchanged keepsakes, and that I riveted on my wrist the slender gold bangle which had hitherto adorned her faultless arm, clasping upon it (she nothing loth) a massive similar ornament.

"All preparations had been duly made for my departure. The servants had been sent on some days before, and I started as early as possible on the morning of the first day of my leave, speedily reaching Abbotabad, where I found myself in a delightfully cool climate, in the middle of the Hills, quite European in scenery, with refreshing green grass under foot, and around large timber and diversified flowering shrubs in clumps and coppices.

"I had for travelling partner my favourite subaltern, young S——, one of the cheeriest of chums, and I am thankful that he still remains to join me occasionally in a smoke, and a chat on 'auld lang syne.'

"We were soon over the pass and into Cashmere, proceeding by a mule track, running along the course of the river, here a broad mountain torrent, rushing and thundering through the narrow gorge which forms the pass, the line of road on the right bank of the stream falling and rising in steep gradients along the hillside, plentifully strewed with rocks and boulders, and skirted in many places by a steep, giddy precipice. We found black partridge and chicore in abundance,

My chum, a keen sportsman and good shot, often contributed to the pot a welcome addition to our ordinary humble fare. Occasionally we fell in with a troop of monkeys, leaping from branch to branch, also apparently travelling. Proceeding onwards, the river gradually grows narrower, falling in a roar, and tumbles over its steep, rocky bed in splashing cataracts, constantly being fed by tributary rivulets, cascading from the adjacent hills, clad with feathery fir-trees, right away down to the water's edge. Oh! the fragrant aromatic perfume of those pines, so grateful, so delicious to the wanderer from the arid plains below. Many of the gorges are extremely beautiful. The mountains white topped with snow, the river with foam—all was novel and exhilarating. Charming was the rest at eventide, drinking in scenes of quiet beauty in some picturesque spot, handy for pitching a small hill tent, and sharp was the appetite for whatever sort or condition of provender our cook had ready—and how wonderfully do these natives manage to supply a dinner in the most unpromising of situations, with but some 'chatties' (earthen pots) and a cleverly contrived fireplace made of a few sods and stones."

"Couldn't you cut the picturesque, Colonel," saucily chirped young Stewart, "and get on to the *dénouement*?"

"Choop!" (Anglice, "silence") muttered the veteran.

"One memorable hot day, while tramping towards a halting-place called 'Ginglee,' wearied by a long march and the steep ascent, I felt almost overcome by thirst; my lips were sore, parched, and cracked, and I could

find no water. Jogging longingly onwards, at last the gentle murmur of a ripple reached me, and I saw a little wooded dell, through which the welcome stream was gurgling. I darted on a few paces, entered, and flung myself on my knees to drink. While thus engaged, I heard the voice of my sub. from behind calling me in an excited tone. My first thought was of some wild beast, and I hesitated to stir.

“‘For God’s sake, look up!’ this time shouted S——; ‘come here, quick! quick!’

“I backed out from my stooping position, fortunately without rising to my full height; and well for me was it that I did not extend myself, for just above me, in startling proximity, its feet almost touching my cap (a collision with the thing might have toppled it down upon me, in a sudden ghastly embrace), shrivelled, drained, and black, all but mummied by sun and wind, a corpse hung by the neck from a branch, one hand seeming to point a finger in fearful significance to where I had just knelt.

“Oh, but it was a gruesome sight! ‘a thing to shudder at, not to see.’ The tattered, loose garments, disclosing the torn, withered flesh, from which the foul carrion birds had just been scared, leaving their hideous banquet in scraggy strips; the grinning skull, still swathed with a ragged turban; the empty sockets, the dropped jaw, the loathsome body, of which the sudden sight and the thought of where I had been drinking gave me a creeping shudder all over, and a faint, sickening sensation. Need I say Exshaw was called in?

"It was, as I afterwards discovered, the corpse of an assassin—a servant who had throttled his master, a native travelling merchant from the Punjab, during his mid-day siesta in this peaceful dell; he was hanged there by order of the Maharajah, over the very spot where the murder had been committed, and left to rot. A veritable scarecrow, gentlemen!"

"Evidently did not scare away the buzzards; though you did, Colonel," stammered forth young Irrepressible. "And had you no curiosity to inquire into the circumstances of the murder, Colonel?"

"I was most curious indeed anent all that concerned my decomposed friend, and through the agency of my faithful Seikh servant, Goormuck Singh, gleaned what follows, which I will endeavour to narrate as it was told me.

"Hera was the prettiest damsel among the floating population of the Cashmere lake, her rosy mouth showing pearly teeth; her tiny hands and feet a sculptor might envy to model; her lithe and slender figure, which the loose, dirty cotton robe she wore could not wholly conceal; on her head a faded scarlet skull-cap; her hair, plain on the temples and knotted behind, with a gleam of chestnut through its darkness, was usually decked with a spray of jasmine. Her splendid eyes had a cruel, feline expression, totally wanting in that dog-like, truthful softness so characteristic of Eastern orbs. Her heart, such as she had, was given to Aziz, a comely young boatman. She was, moreover, as avaricious as a Cashmeree could be, and tired of her

dull work on the Wular Lake, gathering the water-nut, or assisting in propelling the boat.

"The old merchant, who was rich and amorous, thought that, fittingly attired, she would make a charming addition to his already well-stocked zenana. A bargain was speedily concluded with her impecunious, indifferent parents, and the purchased girl started with her lord and master on his return journey to the Punjab.

"But Hera had no desire to quit her beloved valley—to dwell among strangers, in a foreign land, with a man whom she utterly loathed; so she contrived on the road to seduce the young servant, and to win him over by her beauty and promises to consent to murder the old man, and share with her the money they rightly supposed he carried about him.

"Laloo, a treacherous, mild Hindoo, had not sufficient pluck to attack the stalwart Punjabee openly, who was strong and very vigorous for his years, well armed, wary, and especially watchful at night. Thus craft was necessary to accomplish the object. While resting in the dell described, after a plentiful repast, the young girl lovingly brought him his hubble-bubble (a kind of small hookah). She was, however, careful stealthily to moisten the fragrant tobacco with the juice of a narcotic plant, the properties of which she was well acquainted with.

"‘Hera, light of my eyes,’ murmured the drowsy merchant, over whom the benumbing effect of the soporific fumes he was inhaling was fast creeping, ‘I feel strangely wearied, and my thoughts wander.’

“‘The sun was hot,’ she replied, ‘and the road long to-day. Let my lord yield to the balmy influence of rest in the cool air, with his faithful slaves to watch over him. Hera shall fan her master’s heated brow, and sing him the slumber song he loves.’

“‘At once the monotonous chant stole on his ear, while she waved her graceful arms over his head, which speedily dropped in heavy sleep.

“‘Now, Lalloo,’ hoarsely whispered Hera, ‘be alive; off with your kummerbund, and twist it round his throat—he can’t hurt you.’

“Two or three turns of the muslin round the victim’s neck, a combined and steady pull together, a struggle, a muffled cry, and all was over.

“On stripping the dead body, a belt was found well stuffed with gold mohurs. Over the division of the spoil the greedy partners in guilt quarrelled, and the girl, seriously alarmed at the savage menaces of the now excited murderer, fearing for her own life, fled like a young antelope by a zig-zag she knew of, and on reaching the near hamlet, informed the headman of what had just occurred. The village watchman secured the murderer ere he could escape from the scene of his crime. What befell him you know.”

“And what happened to the girl?” inquired Stewart.

“You shall learn.

“Soon after I had arrived at Serinuggur, I went one day with a friend who was in the Civil Service to see the shawls in Hadji’s ‘dookan,’ where, while discussing the usual refreshments, consisting of Russian tea, cakes,

and sweetmeats, I recounted the adventure I had met with on my journey, which my friend interpreted for the benefit of Hadji. It was from this man that I heard a little of the fate of the murderess, which you may well believe I listened to with all the anxiety of interest incident to its being interpreted to me a little at a time. He told us that having betrayed the man she had incited to the crime, she found the place too hot for her, and that she had finally escaped to British territory, where she was known to have adopted the name of *Motee*.

"Whether or not it was the stuffy smell of the stock-in-trade, or the heat of the close room, or the exciting events of the past days that affected me, it would be useless to surmise; I suddenly fainted. When I came to myself I was bathed in perspiration and perfumes, and being fanned by Hadji with a hand punkah. Excusing myself by saying I was subject to sudden fainting fits, I got to my bungalow as quickly as possible. In a few days after, feeling very downhearted, I bade farewell to the Happy Vale of Cashmere, and returned to Peshawur, when I found that my Motee had escaped from the good old missionary's house within a few days of my departure, carrying with her every valuable on which she could lay her hands.

"Now, as the weather has cleared, do you boys be off to the Park, and I'll away to the library, and doze over the fire, perchance to see faces in the coals, and feel happy, for my reminiscences are not all sad."

The boys walked for some distance from the club in silence ; at length Stewart exclaimed—

“ Did you fellows notice, when a spark from the dear old Colonel's pipe fell upon the back of his hand, and he was rubbing his wrist, the glimmer of a gold bangle hidden under his sleeve ? I would just like to know if the old man wears that, as some of those Indian fellows do, in memory of a love in days of yore.”

LOVE AT FIRST HEARING.

BY HALL BYRNE.

ON the evening of the 15th November, eighteen hundred and—— well, “never mind the rest,” those tell-*tail* figures might produce an impression among my readers that I am, if not actually old, at least elderly, while the fact is I am neither. “A man is as old as he feels,” and according to that dictum I resemble a certain witty Frenchman, who, when congratulated on his “half century,” replied, “Nay, I am not fifty, but only twenty-five *for the second time*.” On the date in question, then, London was visited by the densest fog ever remembered by the “oldest inhabitant.” It was the more remarkable from the suddenness with which the evening changed from a comparatively clear and pleasant, to a superlatively thick and unpleasant one. At seven o’clock the stars were visible, while at eight the street lamps gave but a rushlight glimmer, discernible only by the wayfarers when within touch of the lamp-posts; the globed lights of the gin-palaces and the naked, flaring gas-jets of the butchers’ and fruiterers’ shops seemed mere shreds of flame, hanging

loosely in the air ; vehicular traffic was suspended, and the road became another "silent highway." The newspapers of the following day teemed with accounts of accidents and hair-breadth escapes therefrom, collisions at sea and on land, mails delayed, sober citizens being lost, and citizens who were perhaps *not* sober being *found* (drowned), having walked into the rivers or canals. Every one had an adventure to relate, and "the fog" was "in everybody's mouth" for weeks after.

At that time I was a clerk in an accountant's office in the City, and, a few days before this visitation of fog, had changed my lodgings from a southern to a northern suburb. Great pressure of business had kept me late in town for many evenings, and since taking possession of my new "diggings," I had not reached them much before midnight. On this eventful evening, however, I was able to leave the office at seven o'clock, and feeling jaded and faint, proposed to a fellow-clerk who lived at Highbury that we should walk home "for the sake of the fresh air." Those who have experienced the fag end of fourteen hours a day, in an ill-ventilated, gas-lit, many-clerked office, can understand the blessedness of such "fresh air" even as could be obtained during a walk from Moorgate Street to Holloway. Disregarding the "h"-less invitations of the "Favourite" conductor to ride to "'Ibury, 'Ollerway, 'Ornsey, or 'Igit 'Ill," we took the marrow-bone stage, and revelled in the balmy gales wafted from the side streets of the "City Road," the "East Road," and the "Lower Road"

(now "translated" into Essex Road), until we reached the more aristocratic and salubrious atmosphere of Canonbury Square. Emerging from thence into Upper Street, Islington, we saw "the clouds of night come rolling down," and before we could say "Hullo!" (which is an exclamation much more in use than the "Jack Robinson" of fiction), we were "shrouded in *mist-ery*" (punning was my fellow-clerk's weak point). The effect was strange, and reminded me of the witch scenes in *Macbeth*, when Charles Kean "upholstered" Shakespeare at the Princess's Theatre. It was as if fold upon fold of grey gauze were lowered between us and the gas-lighted shops; down it came, wave after wave, and the pedestrians appeared "as trees walking."

I forget at this distance of time (I was just past my *first* "twenty-five" then) what had suggested the subject of our chat during the walk, but I do not forget that the subject was love. I fancy my companion had been twitting me with my bachelordom, for he, although my junior, had "wife and weans" awaiting him at home. He had said that it had been a case of "love at first sight" with him, and I had ridiculed the idea, not so much from hard-headed lack o' sentiment as for argument's sake.

"'Whoever loved, that loved not at first sight?'" quoted he.

"Pooh, pooh!" I retorted, "the notion's absurd; one's *fancy* may be tickled at first sight, but love, worthy the name, can only spring from congeniality of

tastes, sympathies, and aims, and how are these to be discovered at first sight ? ”

“ There’s no absurdity at all in the case,” said he ; “ the eye is not only rapid but comprehensive in its observation, and while by its means our sense of outward beauty is gratified, we may—thanks to Lavater and the phrenologists—estimate to some extent the ‘ inward and spiritual graces ’ of the person under inspection, so that when an impressionable ‘ Edwin ’ is introduced to a susceptible ‘ Angelina,’ he may, if he be an Edwin of sense as well as of sensibility, discover in the contour of her shapely head, in the firmness as well as the sweetness of her mouth, in the depth and expression as well as the sparkle of her eyes, that she is ‘ good as she is fair.’ What need of any ‘ *second sight* ’ ? ”

I laughed, and hoped *his* Angelina had proved “ all his fancy painted her.” “ For myself,” I added, “ love is a plant of slower growth.”

“ Ah, well, you’ll be caught yet,” he said ; “ however, it will not be to-night ; this is going to be *the* fog of the season, through which Venus herself could not captivate you ; you are safe until to-morrow, anyhow.”

“ Nothing is so sure to happen as the unexpected.” Who could have conceived such an insane idea, as that I should, within an hour from this vaticination of safety, be more impetuous than my friend, and fall in love, without even the “ *first sight* ” justification ? Yet so it was, and this is *how* it was.

When we arrived at “ Highbury Corner ”—where my friend was to leave me—the darkness was Egyptian,

and was not only "a darkness which might be felt," but *smelt* also. Soon the "grey gauze" waves smelling of "washing day" were followed by heavy brown curtains, reeking of soot, and the expression, "You couldn't see your hand before you," described without exaggeration the existing state of things.

"Now," said my companion, "do you think you can find your way home? if not, come home with me."

"Oh! I'm all right," I replied; "I've a first-rate bump of 'locality,' the phrenology man told me; and as I've never yet reached my new quarters by daylight, the fog will not make so much difference; besides, I shall enjoy the fun."

"*Will* you? I'm not so sure of that. Now look here, or rather feel here. You are now on the right-hand side of the main road facing north; well, keep on this side till you come to 'The Nag's Head;' after passing that, you will have to cross three roadways before you come to the one you should turn down; when you *do* 'turn down,' remember Oleander Road is the second on the left. Is that clear?"

"As mud," I replied; "I mean to be among the Oleanders in less than half-an-hour; my landlady said something this morning about a steak and kidney pudding for supper. Why, my very appetite will guide me home."

"Good-night, then, and may good digestion wait on that appetite, which will certainly have to wait for that pudding. Cold steak and kidney pudding! Visions of dyspepsia, avaunt! By Jove! this fog thickens every minute. Good-night!"

My friend left me, and I walked—"by faith and not by sight"—for some few minutes without adventure, taking care not to leave the pavement. "Now, Master Walter," said I to myself; "let's see what that bump of locality's worth. This 'dim (ir)religious light' here comes of course from the little beer-shop where the 'Goose club has commenced——'

"Hullo! I say, Locality, this is a poor beginning; why, it's a furniture shop, which, I suppose, has been closed when I've passed on other evenings, for I don't remember having seen it. Ah! here's the 'Red Lion,' come. (I'm sorry that my late hours have drawn so many taverns upon your map, Mr. L.) Eh! what! *not* the 'Red Lion,' but a butcher's? Now look here, my *bump*-tious friend, it's my belief you're a hum—or has this fog demoralised you? Well, I'll give you one more chance, and an easy one, too; this *is* the railway arch, surely? Bravo, Locality! now it's all straight sailing."

Putting on a "spurt" I presently collided against some one coming south, and unwisely turned round to offer an apology. "Beg par——," I began, but my opposer was not in sight, and I heard a retreating voice say, "Beg pardon, old f'ler, didn't know it was you, the moon dazzles yer eyes so."

From this point I commenced to "go wrong," and having forgotten I had turned round, I resumed my walk, with no clearer notion of the points of the compass than he has who is blindfolded and, after cataloguing his "father's horses," is told to "turn round three times,

and catch whom he may." Presently a sort of Will-o'-the-wisp came dancing towards me, accompanied by an odour of pitch, and I heard a voice saying, "Light yer home, sir? Buy a link, sir?" I was getting confused, and was somewhat tempted to accept the aid of this low-pitched voice, but I still had a remnant of faith in my phrenological certificate, and resolved that I would try my "bump" once more. "Jog merrily on the foot pathway," I hummed to myself, but I had not "jogged" far, when a cluster of *ignus fatui* (I'm not sure of this Latin plural), some shouting men, and the clatter of horses' feet, discovered to me the fact that I was off the "foot pathway," and in the road, and that a belated "growler" was being led to the stables; more offers of help from link-eyed boys, and more independence in my refusal; for I thought I had regained my right side of the way, and could descry the red lamp of a surgery which I remembered, and which "Locality" said was Dr. So-and-So's."

"Now, Master Walter, you must keep on 'the even tenor of your way,' and make for your guiding star, 'The Nag's Head,' and then, hey! for the Oleanders and supper."

I walked on and on, but no guiding star became visible, and not a sound was heard.

"Hang it!" (The "fun" was evaporating.) "I can't have passed the blessed 'Nag's Head,' and surely its blaze of light ought to be seen now. Hullo! what do I hear?—a fiddle? Good-night, Locality; I'll follow my ears now, and 'go for' that Paganini."

Thus led, I drew nearer to the music, and groping my way in the direction of the sound, came to some iron railings, on the other side of which a strange far-away voice was singing "The girl I left behind me," to the scratchy accompaniment of a fiddle. Presently the performance ended, and I heard the creak of a gate, followed by the tap, tap, tap of a stick on the pavement.

"Eureka! here's a stroke of luck!—a blind fiddler, to whom fog and daylight are alike." My spirits revived, and I began to sing, as I followed the tapping,

"I am a roamer, bold and gay,
But in the fog have lost my way."

No response from "the poor blind," so I quickened my pace, and overtook him with a crash.

"Now, then! where are yer comin' to?" said a hoarse, but good-humoured voice.

"Oh! I *beg* your pardon," said I; "I hope I've not hurt you, but it's so plaguy thick, I didn't see you."

"All right; no 'arm done, an' no offence took."

"Thanks; I'm afraid I've lost my way; is this the Holloway Road?"

"Ollerw'y Road? No, o' course it ain't. Where d'yer want to go to? 'cause I've on'y got one more turn to do, an' then I'll take yer 'ome, wherever it is? I can smell an' taste this 'ere fog's a thick 'un, but fogs don' make no difference to me, 'ceptin' they make me 'oarse."

I debated a moment with myself whether I should go with this Bartimeus, and then let him take me home,

or merely ask him to "put me in the proper way," and trust to "Locality" to manage the rest.

"How long will you be over this 'turn,' as you call it, and how far am I from Oleander Road?"

"Holeander Road? why, you're goin' right away from it. Now, look 'ere, I got to go an' sing a song, an' play a toon or two, close by 'ere, to a poor little chap with a broke back, as keeps awake for me of a Friday night; he's on'y nine year old, an' two out o' the nine 'e's laid in 'is little bed in the same persishun,—that's 'ard lines, ain't it? Still 'e's lively, mind yer, an' in the summer-time they opens the winder, an' me an' 'im 'as a bit o' chat together. Well, I'll jes go an' give 'im 'is turn, then I meets my wife close by—she's blind, like me, yer know, mister—an' then I'll take yer 'ome like a bird. What d'yer say?"

"Say?" I replied, "why, done! Give me hold of a bit of your coat, or I shall lose you, as sure as fate; and, I say, don't be longer than you can help, for I'm as hungry as a hunter. Now then, 'lead on,' Bartimeus, 'I'll follow thee.'"

"All right, on'y my name ain't Barty, nor yet Meus neether, it ain't; my name's Joe,—Joe Kimble."

"Is it?" said a clear feminine voice, so close to me that I started aside. "Oh, I'm so *glad* it's you, Joe, for you can take me home, you know. Aunt will be so frightened; I ought to have been home an hour ago, but I'm completely lost; I thought I was in the main road, but there are no lights, or shops, or anything; *wherever* are we?"

"Why, it's Miss Linton, ain't it?" said the fiddler.

"Yes, Joe, it is. I hope you're going our way, though I know it's not your night for us; but *do* come; fogs make no difference to you, poor old fellow, and for once you have the advantage of us who can see."

"O' course I'll see yer 'ome, miss. I got one customer for your road a'ready; le' me see, what number did you say yourn was, mister?"

"Oh! never mind me," I replied. "This young lady's friends will be anxious; pray attend to her, and I'll follow in your wake. I can find my house if once I'm in the road." The fiddler then explained to the invisible lady that he was "jest a-goin' to play to the little chap with the broke back," but if she liked he would take her home first.

"Oh dear! I *should* be sorry to disappoint the poor little boy. How long will it take you, Joe?"

"Oh! I won' be long, miss. I was tellin' this gen'lm'n—if 'e didn' mind coming with me. We'd pick up my missus 'ard by 'ere, an' be in Holeander Road in less than 'arf an hour."

"Very well, Joe; let's start at once. Auntie won't be *too* anxious, I hope. Let me take hold of your coat, for I positively can't see you; there, now then, quick march!"

"Foller on, sir," said Joe to me, as he gave a preliminary tap on the pavement.

"Oh! I beg the gentleman's pardon for running away with the guide. Perhaps, sir, you too can find a piece of 'Joseph's coat,' although its 'many colours' will be no help to you in this fog."

I don't know what I replied, but as we marched along in single file, my hunger and all desire to reach Oleander Road melted away, and I felt that if only this voice would continue in my ears, I would gladly walk about in the murky air all night.

There are voices *and* voices, some which would, by their innate harshness, mar the sweetest poetry or noblest prose, and others which would make music of the multiplication table. This charm and power of mere voice, independent of *what* is said or sung, is due, I suppose, to that subtle thing called "*timbre*," which generates what may be termed emotional harmonics, and sets heart-strings, as well as air-waves, in vibration ; but whatever may be the scientific explanation of the phenomenon, I can only record the fact that I was completely fascinated by the mere voice of a person I had never seen, and had only heard for a few moments. We walked on, and I listened greedily to the soft, liquid, yet perfectly clear tones of this modern Lorely, as she prattled little commonplaces about the "dreadful fog," and how she "*could* have got so far out of her way."

Now I was not a "sentimental" young man ; on the contrary, *I was an accountant* ; moreover, there had been "pretty caps set" at me in vain, and my married sisters had assigned me the *rôle* of "bachelor uncle" ; therefore, remembering these things, I called myself to account, for I felt a new sensation at my heart.

"Walter, what are you about ? Why, this voice which thrills you so may be 'voice and nothing more,'

besides, *she may be 'forty and look it.'* Ah! but Bar-timeus here called her 'Miss,' and she lives with an 'aunt.' She's young, I'm sure, and pretty too. By Jove! I'm half *in love* with her already."

"Joe, how clever you are to know just where everybody lives. How *can* you remember them all?" said the siren who was causing me this overhauling of self, as the fiddler stopped and pushed open a gate.

"Oh! I don't know 'ow I does it, but I sees everythink inside o' me some'ow, just the same as you do wi' your eyes, an' me an' my stick knows the feel of all the kerbs, an' lamp-posts, an' railin's, an' things, an' we werry seldom makes a mistake. Now, if you two'll stop here, I'll go down the airey steps, an' play the little chap a toon."

"*You two!*" I remember now how pleased I was at the sort of "leave-the-young-folks-to-themselves" tone in Joe's instructions.

"The blind man and you are old acquaintances, it seems," I said.

"Yes, he comes to us once a week, and isn't it curious? He has a blind wife too; they take different routes all day, then meet in the evening at some sort of blind folk's Clapham Junction, and stump home together arm-in-arm." Then, modulating her dulcet voice to the relative minor: "Isn't it sad for this poor boy here?—compelled to lie still so long, and in pain too; yet I'm told he's very patient and even cheerful, for Joe says he sometimes jokes him about his playing,

and asks for all sorts of impossible tunes on purpose to hear Joe's excuses."

"I must admit," I said, "that Joe's fiddle might be better handled, and his voice is not all that could be desired; but I was very glad to him murdering 'The girl he left behind him' just now, for without his aid I should still have been wandering hopelessly in this fog, I fear; and, moreover, I am indebted to him for the pleasure of——"

"Oh yes, I know that performance well," interrupted Lorely, with a return to the original major-key—and, *sotto voce*, "poor Joe's voice won't reach the high notes of the tune, so when they occur he leaves off singing and plays a chord on his fiddle, something like this, 'An' let the night be —— so dark, an' e'er so wet and ——dy, —— will return safe back agin, to the girl I lef' beyin' me.'"

This imitation, so perfectly given in the momentary interval between Joe's tunes to the bedridden boy, finished me, and though I laughed outright, the novel sensation at my heart returned with increased force, and I said to myself, "I *must* have a peep at her face, and if that be only half as lovely as her voice, she's an angel."

So I asked her permission to light a cigar, hoping thus to get a glimpse of at least her features.

"Oh yes; pray smoke. I like the smell of a cigar."

But my vesta was no match for the fog (pun not intended) by its tiny glimmer; I could only descry the merest outline of a figure, which for all I could see to the contrary might have belonged to the fiddler.

After a few minutes' smoking, and some chat on the strangeness of our situation, being thus at the mercy of a blind man for "leading," if not for "light," we heard our guide coming towards us, and I said, "I'll ask him to tune up his E string."

"Oh," said Lorely, with a musical little laugh, "he'll tell you he only plays by '*year*.' I've often asked him to put his fiddle in tune, and once, while he was drinking his tea at our door, I tuned it for him just for fun; but his '*year*' must be defective, for next time he came the E was as flat as ever."

"Do *you* play the violin, then?" I asked, in surprise, for lady fiddlers were very rare in those days.

"Yes, I play a little; it's my second study at the Academy."

Here our guide took us in tow again, and as we walked along, I realised another charm in this "*lieblich gedacht*" at my side, and that was the outspoken candour of her speech, the ingenuousness, which took it for granted that "*second study*" and "*the Academy*" were terms needing no explanation.

"And she plays the fiddle! Well, I don't care if she is '*forty*,' and *does* '*look it*' (though I'm certain she isn't and doesn't), *here is my wife if ever I marry*."

"'Tis not her face that love creates,' as old Whitehead sings (for I haven't seen it), but '*her voice, her touch*' have decidedly '*given the alarm*,' and '*I'm in love, in love, in love.*'"

My readers must know that most of my time not occupied by business I had devoted to music, and was

considered a very good fiddler. It was therefore partly to show my companion that we had congeniality of tastes, in one respect at least, and partly from a desire to "show off" a little that I said to our guide, "Oh, I say, Bartimeus, that seems a very good-toned fiddle of yours; let me tune it up for you."

"My name ain't Barty, nor yet Meus, neether; I told you so afore, and my fiddle's right enough for me; I on'y plays by year." Lorely gave a little "I told you so" cough. "'Owsomever," continued Joe, "if you like to put it in toon, you can; I've done playin' for to-night. Here, where are ye? Lay 'old."

I took the fiddle, put it in order, and played an extempore march to the rhythm marked by Joe's stick.

"Ah! you're a perfesh'nal, I s'pose; you *can* play, an' no mistake. I say, old 'ard a minnit; my missis 'll be at the corner o' the next street; don't say a word; but when I says 'Now,' you jest fire away as you did at fust. My wig, won't she jump!"

"You wicked old Joe," said the voice I loved. "How dare you trick your wife so? What fun, though! come along."

Presently Joe whispered "Now," and I let off as grand a "display of fireworks" as I could, finishing with some variations on "The girl I left behind me."

Joe, in struggling to suppress his laughter, was seized with a fit of coughing, at the conclusion of which he whispered, "Keep my fiddle a bit," and resumed his "tap, tap, tap." After striking a lamp-

post to confirm his whereabouts, he said, very softly, "Keep yer ears open an' there'll be larks."

"Is that you, Joe?" said a voice from somewhere in the fog.

"Yes, 'Lizer, it's me;" then, *sotto voce*, to us, "Foller me a-tip-toe acrost this bit o' road."

We did so, and remained behind him, when he came to a standstill.

"Who was that a-playin' jus' now?" said Mrs. Joe, not in the sweetest tone of voice.

"Oo was a-playin' jus' now? Why, me, o' course; oo should it be? It ain't the sort o' night for Mister Joe Akin to be in the streets, is it?"

"Joe, don't you be a fool? D'yer think I don't know *your* old scrape when I 'ears it? Why, you couldn't play like that—no, not to get yer eyesight. Oo was it, I tell yer?"

"Ah! that's the way wi' you wimmin—allus runnin' down yer own belongin's. I been 'avin' my E string tooned up—that's what makes the difference, I s'pose," said the mendacious old joker.

"Oh, *hindeed*! Well, le' me year yer play another toon, then," said his wife suspiciously.

Joe prodded me with his stick, and I did my very best, quite as much to please Lorely as to contribute to Joe's "larks." I was playing some slow melody on the G string, when we all heard a slap and then a yell from Joe.

"Now, then, wot's that for?"

"For playin' the fool an' not the fiddle. Oo's that be'ind yer?"

While Joe was chuckling at his "larks," his sharper wife had crept close to where he was standing, and discovered she was being tricked. This brought matters to a climax, and explanations having been given, I restored the fiddle to its rightful owner.

Very soon afterwards, Joe said,—

"'Ere's Holeander Road ; what number's yourn ?"

I was anything but pleased, for 'Lizer had walked off with Lorely, and I felt that my adventure was about to end flatly, like a damp squib.

"Oh, I can find my way now," I replied. "Here, Joe, hold out your hand ; here's a shilling for you. I say, where does the young lady live ? you know, don't you ?"

"O' course I do," he whispered ; "an' just wouldn't you like to know, too, eh ?"

"Yes, Joe, I should. I've—I mean—that is—I've taken a great liking to her."

"Well, she's at 'er door now, 'long o' 'Lizer ; No. 37's 'er 'ouse."

"The deuce it is !" I gasped. "Why, No. 37 is *my* — Here, Joe—here's another shilling for you ; you're the finest fiddler in the whole world."

"Come, I say, stow it about my fiddlin' ; why, I only plays by year."

Here 'Lizer joined us, and I heard the voice which was now my "corn, wine, and oil" say,—

"Good-night, Joe ; I've given 'Lizer something for you, and I'm so *much* obliged to you ; and good-night to *you*, sir, with many thanks for your beautiful playing."

A smart little "rat-a-tat-tat" on a knocker guided me to the door she stood at, and after hastily bidding adieu to the two blind folk, I groped my way up the steps, just as Mrs. Malcolm, my landlady, opened the door.

"Is that you, Nelly? Oh, I'm so glad! What a dreadful night! Why, I can hardly see you even now. Come in, or we shall have the house full of fog. Why, I declare! here's Mr. Gooch, too. Well, I never did! Mr. Gooch, I must introduce you; this is my niece, Miss Linton. Nelly, this is Mr. Gooch, who has taken the drawing-rooms, you know, only he's been so late home of a night and left so early in the morning you've not seen him. Well, I declare! to think of your both coming to the door together. Now, Nelly, run and get your things off; and perhaps, Mr. Gooch, you won't mind supping downstairs to-night with us" (Won't *mind!* Heavens!), "for your chimney *has* smoked so I've been obliged to let the fire out; it's the fog, I s'pose. Don't be so long, for the pudding must be boiled to rags;" and still muttering "Why, why;" and "Well, to be sure!" the good old dame retreated, leaving me to crow and thrill at this unexpected *dénouement*.

"Was there ever such luck?" I said to myself, while "tittivating." "I was wondering how I should set about gaining a proper introduction, and here everything's done for me; and she's beautiful, too—I know she must be. But suppose she's engaged," I thought; "surely others have felt the charm of her lovely voice to say nothing of her beautiful face; and doubtless some

fellow-student at 'The Academy' has succumbed to it." (Ugh! how cold the room seemed at that moment!) "But then," I resumed, more cheerfully, "*she* may not have succumbed. I hope *she's* heart-whole; she *must* be. I can't live without her—*won't*, I swear!"

A knock at my door, and Maggy's voice, announcing that "supper was ready," terminated my hot-and-cold thrills; and with my heart beating "nineteen to the dozen," I entered the cosy little breakfast-parlour; a cheerful fire and plenty of light sent all the "engaged" fears packing, and when shortly afterwards my Lorely entered, I could fain have laughed out for joy.

"I hope I've not kept you waiting," she began, in her bright, yet velvety tone. "Good-evening, Mr. Foskey" (Mr. Foskey, an old bachelor of fifty, was the only other lodger); "how did *you* get home? Ah! *you've* not been seen home by a blind man and his blind wife. Oh, aunty! it's been *such* fun; only fancy, that but for accidentally meeting with poor old fiddler Joe, both Mr. Gooch and I would have been lost, and then what *would* have become of you? I know what would have happened to *you*, Mr. Foskey; you'd have eaten our share of the pudding; and, oh my! *wouldn't* you have had indigestion. You must really give Joe sixpence next week."

The supper over, Mrs. Malcolm insisted on "a full, true, and particular account" of our adventure, my part of which—up to the point of my falling in with Bartimeus—I recounted briefly, for I was as anxious as my landlady to hear my enchantress; and while she

recapitulated all the details of our journey, I feasted my eyes on her beautiful face. Reader, I would I could depict that face for you ; but far more do I wish you could hear her speak.

"That is the best part of beauty," says Bacon, "which a painting cannot express ; and similarly that is the sweetest melody which is sung only to one." She was neither blonde nor brunette, but a delicious "blend" of both. Blonde as to eyes and transparency of complexion ; brunette, as to hair, brows, and a certain warmth of colouring. As I anticipated from her rapid, yet very distinct enunciation, her teeth were faultless. (Public speakers and singers, please note, and if Nature has been unkind, consult a dentist.) With these few outlines, perhaps you can fill in details which may give an idea of her face ; but of her voice as it affected, and still affects me, I can give no description. Her most simple utterance sets some chord vibrating in my heart, and, as I tell her sometimes, if she were to enact Lurline from either muddy Thames, coally Tyne, or the Styx itself, I should be compelled to follow her.

I am astonished, but not displeased, that other people seem not to hear the "*voix celeste*," which sets me quivering, an exception being her aunt, who, when I told her I loved her niece "at first hearing," said, with tears coursing down her cheeks : "Oh, Mr. Gooch, *she has an angel's voice*. Her mother was my youngest sister, and died when Nelly was born ; and sometimes, when Nell is serious and speaks quietly to me, it is my sister in heaven that I hear."

On the 15th May following, in reply to a question put to her by a clergyman, my Lorely said, "I will;" and those two monosyllables, and some subsequent forms, changed her name to "Gooch." "Not a very long courtship," you say? Oh yes; it has been very long, for it is going on still, notwithstanding the fact that at a recent concert of our local Harmonic Society the following item appeared in the programme:—

QUARTET IN E MINOR . . . Miss NELLY GOOCH.

1st Violin . . . Mr. Walter Gooch.

2nd Violin . . . Mrs. Walter Gooch.

Viola . . . Miss Nelly Gooch.

Violoncello . . . Mr. Walter Malcolm Gooch.

We are great at "string quartets," but I hold with good old Will and Byrd, who said: "*There is not any musicke of instruments whatsoever comparable to that which is made of the human voice.*"

THE ROMANCE OF TWIDLER'S HALL.

BY THOMAS ARCHER.

I STRUCK him though. He called me a pantaloon, did he? But I struck him,—him, the soldier that had been ; the son of the pompous alderman, justice of the peace ; him, the cruel coward, braggart, who came between her and me. Not that she ever loved me—how should she when I was poor and had no word to say, and yet was proud, and would have toiled for her, waited for her, fought for her? Yes, I would, “book-worm” as I was. It was for her sake, when his false tongue wagged against her, and not because he called me pantaloon, that I struck him twice. Yes, and if he stood here before me now I’d—— Heaven forgive me! A poor, feeble, sinful old man, who does not forgive the dead, if, indeed, he be dead ; but who does not *forget* the dead either, for *she* is dead—upon her snow-strewn grave I left a bunch of winter flowers but yesterday. Ah me! I never wander in that dingy churchyard, where the sound of the great roaring city is hushed to a sleepy murmur, but I seem to leave half my poor life there ; would that I could leave it all, I sometimes think, and that when the sexton comes to

bring the keys of the church on a Sunday morning he should find the mere body of me lying there, my head leaning on the stone that bears her name—not *his* name, *her* name—her one dear name by which I called her last of all.

But these are ill thoughts, and, as the poet says, "this way madness lies." Let me get to my books, there is comfort and companionship in them; and yet I have held my finger in this page till the light is gone and it's too dark to read.

I suppose I was meant for a bookworm, and yet I didn't like school. At all events I didn't like the Free Grammar School of St. Boanerges By-Church, to which I had the privilege of being elected when my poor father was clerk of the Twangler's Company, and lived in the old hall till he bought this little house in Hoxton. Ah me! how I seem to see the old black oaken wainscot of the court-room, and the little parlour where the firelight danced in deep crimson liquid flecks and pools in the polished floor and the shadowy panels. How I can remember going in after dark in winter evenings, and sitting there, a lonely, motherless boy, and seeming to be lost in some mysterious way to the outside world, as I pored over the tales of old romance, or, when I grew older, traced the origin of some old custom in one of the heavy leather-bound volumes that filled the quaint cramped bookcase of the clerk's office.

In the midst of my dreaming one thing was real to me, and I suppose it was a part of my queer character;

that what was said to be fancy in other young men was the one fact of my life. I mean love. Apart from the daily routine of the office, which often became mechanical, so that I could pursue it and seem to live otherwise even while it was going on, I had no true life in the present—I was going to say no strongly conscious life of my own, apart from the region of imagination—except when I was sitting in the deep old escutcheoned bay-window of Twidler's Hall, looking out upon the old shaded courtyard, where the sunlight, darting amidst the spreading plane trees, flecked and chequered the marble pavement, and the little carved fountain trilled and rippled till it incited the canary hanging in its gilded cage to break into song that drowned its splashing murmur, and silenced the sparrows twittering about the heavy woodwork of the old porch. That was my real world, because there was one figure, one face, that held me to it, as though by a spell that I could not, and never sought, to break. I scarcely remember the time I did not love her.

Mary never suspected, as I sat watching her at work or reading to her on those summer evenings, that my heart was ready to break out into words of passionate entreaty. She had been so used to see me sitting there, or to run with me round the little paved courtyard, or the old, dingy grass plot in the midst of its prim gravel walks at the side of the hall, that I had become an ordinary association of her life. I had left school while she was still learning of a governess, who came four times a week to teach her; for her father, as

clerk of the Twidlers, was a man of more consideration than mine. But Mary was motherless as I was. Our mothers had been dear friends in their schoolgirl days and afterwards, and our fathers were old acquaintances; and so it came about that I was often at Twidler's Hall for the week round after office hours, and that I seemed to belong as much to the place as the old, fat, wheezy brown spaniel that stood upon the broad stone step and welcomed me with tail and tongue. But while I remained, as it were, stationary—an old-fashioned boy, an older-fashioned youth, an archaic man—she altered. Occasionally when I went to Twidler's Hall she had gone out visiting, and I was left to dream away the evening in the old window waiting for her return, or, if I knew which way she came, loitering in the street in case she should be unattended by the maid who was usually sent to meet or to fetch her when her father did not go himself.

It was on one of these evenings that I suddenly understood what was the cause of the undefinable change that I had noticed in her manner some time before. In the previous week the Twidlers had held a Court dinner, and that was the evening when the alderman introduced his son—"My son, the captain," as he called him. A captain by purchase, and with the right to wear a brilliant uniform and long moustachios. A chucklepated fellow, for all his scarlet coat and clanking heels, but with a bullying, insolent air. When the feast was over, and the guests were preparing to go, it was time for me to go too, for I had been late

helping to make up some of the accounts in the office ; and, after taking my hat off the hook in the passage, turned to the old sitting-room to look for Mary that I might say, " Good-night."

It was beyond her time for being about, especially on the Court nights, but to my surprise, as I opened the door, she was standing there with the captain, who was holding her hand. He had no business there, and she knew it. The other diners were already coming down the stairs at the end of the passage. He must have stolen down quickly, and she must have been waiting for him. This all passed through my mind in a moment as I stood looking at him, such an ugly leer upon his face as he bent over her hand that I had to clench my fingers till the blood started in the nails to keep down my rising wrath.

" Hallo ! who's this ?" he said, as he turned with a swagger, but without dropping her hand.

" Oh, Richard ! I thought you'd gone home long ago. It's only a friend of my father's, and he's so near-sighted I suppose he did not see anybody here," she replied, in a flutter.

" Dev'lish little manners," said the captain, staring at me.

I was dumb, and my limbs seemed to be rigid.

" Is he deaf too ?" asked the captain, with a grin.

" Dev'lish little manners, really."

" You're welcome to the little there are," I blurted out ; " you have none of your own. Mary, shall I take you to your father ?"

She pushed away my outstretched hand and hurried from the room, and he went out also, after bestowing upon me an oath which I could hear him repeat as he sought his hat and cloak in the hall. I stood there without a word. My heart had seemed to drop within me as a coal fire burnt to ashes falls together in a grate. The warmth that kept it alive had gone out suddenly. But it smouldered yet, and when I went to meet her a few evenings afterwards I had determined to gather courage and speak to her once for all. I walked mechanically through the streets between Twidler's Hall and Doctors' Commons, where she had gone on a visit, and was just turning by the old garden beyond the Proctors' College when I heard voices close to me, and, looking up, saw her walking with *him*, clinging to his arm, looking into his face. I hesitated for a moment, and they saw me. "Good-night," said she, in a formal voice, as she clutched his arm tighter, and they both passed on.

So all was over. It was many weeks before I went again to see her father. It might have been many more. I think I should never have gone again but for my own father saying to me, "Dick, my son, I can see, and I feel for you too, but bear up; you are no boy now, you know. And I had set my heart on it too; so had our old friend. He wants you to go and see him, Dick, to help him make up his quarterly account as you used to do. Perhaps she'll tire of this popinjay, and, when she comes to her senses——"

"Or when he deserts her," I interrupted, bitterly.

The dear old man said no more, but pressed my hand—his other hand upon my shoulder. "Go and see our old friend," he repeated, presently.

I went—taking care to avoid the familiar sitting-room, and to go only to the office. There her father sat, looking strangely worn and anxious; but he rose to greet me.

He was pleased to see me. I could see that by the smile, that brought something of the old look back upon his face; but his voice shook as he told me that at the first news of active service the pompous alderman had bought the captain off, and that now he had all his time to dangle after Mary. It had broken him, he said; he was not the man he had been. His accounts confused him, and his cash balance was short. He was going that very night to see an old cousin to ask if she would take charge of Mary for a while, and if I would only once more look through the books, while he was gone, perhaps I might once more put them right.

It was a cold night, near Christmas, and there was a bright fire in the office, which seemed to light the room with a ruddy glow that quite paled the flame of the shaded lamp upon the writing table. All was so still that the ticking of the old clock upon a bracket seemed to grow into an emphatic beat upon my ear quickened with nervous pain; but I sat down, and was soon immersed in my accustomed drudgery of figures, so that, when I had taken out sundry balances, and checked the totals with a sum of money in gold and silver that lay upon the table in a leather bag, I had ceased to note

how the night wore on, and after tying up the cash and placing it inside the secretaire, of which I turned the key, I sat down before the fire in a high-backed old leather chair, and began to think, or dream, no matter which.

Above the high carved mantel was a little round old-fashioned mirror, and as I lay back in the chair my purblind eyes were fixed upon it, as it reflected the mingled gleams of lamp and fire that touched the shining surfaces of the oaken wall or the furniture of the room. My back was to the door, and yet, by the sudden passing of a shadow across the glass, I saw that it was being opened stealthily, and all the doors were too heavy and well hung to make a sound, if only the locks were noiselessly turned. I was so concealed by the great chair, and by the darkness of the corner where I sat beyond the radius of the lamp, that the intruder advanced quickly. He evidently expected to find nobody there, and, with scarcely a glance round, went to the table, peered amongst the books, and then, as though not finding what he sought, turned to the secretaire, and, with a sudden wrench of the key, opened it. I had had time to think what I should do, and as his hand closed on the bag of money I sprang to the bell beside the fireplace and rang it furiously; then darted across the room and stood with my back to the door. The captain—for it was he, and I had known him by his height and figure—gave a sort of shriek and turned livid as he dropped the bag and came towards me.

"You here?" he said. "It's well that I happened to come in and catch you."

"Stand back!" I cried, "or I'll raise the neighbourhood to see the noble captain who has turned thief. You don't go till the servants, at least, know who and what you are."

"You fool!" he retorted, his face working. "It's only your word against mine, and who has the most right here, I'd like to know?"

All this time some one was pushing heavily against the door from the outside, and a woman was whimpering there. I stepped back, still facing him, and flung it open. It was Mary, looking white and wild, and holding a sealed letter in her hand.

"What is this? Why, are you here, Algernon?" she asked, turning to the captain.

"He was here to rob your father of another treasure beside yourself," I said. "He is a thief, and I will proclaim him as such."

"A thief? How dare you!" she said, her face all aflame. "Do you know you are speaking of my husband?"

"Husband!" I cried—"husband!" And I leaned on a chair for support.

"Richard," she said, placing the letter on the table, "I brought this that I might leave it for my father when he came in. You will see that he has it, will you? or if you go before his return, let him find it when he comes."

Married! The room swam round, and as I stood there, dumb and sick, they seemed to swim with it out at the door.

When I came to myself the place was still as death, save for the ticking of the clock and the click of the failing fire. But there lay the letter. Another moment, as it seemed to me, and her father had let himself in, and I had placed it in his hand. He read it half through before he quite understood what had been enclosed in it—a narrow, printed slip of paper. Suddenly he unfolded that, and carried it nearer the light.

“Married,” he said. “Well, thank God for that. But—but—married; and to him!” and he fell forward on the table.

He didn’t die. People don’t mostly die of these shocks. The months went on; the years went on; and though he’d never seen his daughter, nor rightly knew where she was, he heard that her husband had an allowance made him by his father after his gambling debts had been paid; but the alderman had taken his head clerk into partnership, and there was an end of the captain’s going into the business.

My dear old father had died, and left me this house and his small savings. I seldom went to Twidler’s Hall, though I should have been welcome there. Four times a year I lent a hand with the accounts for the sake of old routine, and stayed to eat a little supper and drink a glass of the famous Twidler claret, or to smoke a pipe with the old gentleman, who was failing greatly. His daughter was never mentioned between us, and I supposed he had lost sight of her altogether, when, one night, he said, quite suddenly, “Dick, I wish you’d take a letter and a message to Mary for me.”

He hadn't called me Dick for years, and I thought he was drivelling ; but he held an open letter, into which he was folding some bank-notes.

" You may read it, Dick. They are in London, but she has not been to see me, and she writes for help to tide over some difficulties, she says, till her husband can see his father. She evidently doesn't know that the alderman's in the Bankruptcy Court. Poor dear, poor dear ! she's reaping the fruits of her disobedience, and yet she will not come to see me. To her own hand, Dick, to her own hand only, must this letter go. It tells her how, in the last resort, she may seek my cousin, if she will not come to me before I die. My poor savings—they are but little, Dick—will be in trust for her with my cousin, but she sha'n't know that from me. Could you take this to-morrow morning, Dick ? "

I could do no less than promise to convey it to her, and the next morning set off to find the house, in a rather mean neighbourhood, where I found that she and her husband had taken furnished lodgings. A servant girl took up my name, and I was asked to walk upstairs. There, upon the landing, stood the woman I had not seen since the night she left her father's home, but changed as years should not have changed her, and with a pleading, anxious look in her scared eyes that was grievous to see.

" Richard," she said, with a faint smile, and holding out her hand, " is it you ? "

" I come as the bearer of a written message," I

replied, "but if I can ever do you real service you know well enough that I should gladly aid you."

"Thank you, Richard," she said, gently, "I know it; but my father, he is well? His writing has changed though, it trembles so," and she burst into tears as she went to the landing window to read the letter. She had but just finished, and was slipping it into the bosom of her dress, when, with a sudden gesture, she said, "I dare not stay. I hear him coming up the street. Good-bye, good-bye, and take my love to papa, my dear, dear love. Say I'll write again or see him, but now go, and take no notice."

I went down, and should have passed quietly from the house, but a latch-key turned in the street door, and, as I tried to go out, the "captain" stood in the way. I knew him, bloated, shabby, and broken down as he looked, but should have said nothing had he not also recognised me, and turned upon me with an oath, wanting to know what I did there.

"I had heard of their address," I said, "and that misfortune had overtaken his father, and had come to see whether I could do anything to help them."

"Could I lend him a ten-pound note there and then?" he asked, with an ugly laugh; and when I said "I had no such sum," he broke out again in a torrent of abuse.

I would have pushed past him, but he seized me by the arm, and swung me round facing him. I still strove to get away, when I heard his wife's imploring voice upon the stairs, and he spoke words that made

the little blood there was in me surge swift and hot to my face. In a moment I had wrenched myself free, and struck him full on the mouth with my clenched hand. He was cowed for a moment, and turned white, but there were two or three people looking on by that time.

"You miserable old pantaloons!" he screamed, as he made a rush at me.

But I had one hand on the knob of the door, and, swinging round as though I worked on a pivot, I caught him full between the eyes, and sent him sprawling among the hats and umbrellas that he had knocked down in his fall. Then I closed the door, and walked away. "The page is turned for ever now," I muttered to myself. "I cannot even meet her father again." Poor old gentleman! he died—he died too soon, but not before I'd seen him and held his hand in mine. But she had never been to the old home, and on inquiring at the place where they had lodged, it was believed that they had gone abroad after the death of their two children.

So that was the bitter ending, I thought. And all that dead past was to be closed like a page in a book that is read and clasped.

Yes; but the book is re-opened sometimes, where a sprig of rue has been placed to mark between the leaves.

I didn't change. I was long past changing. And I followed my old pursuits; went to my old haunts; wore my old clothes, as I do now, from day to day.

So years went on, until one dreary afternoon in November—one bright and sunny afternoon it might have been for its influence on my dim calendar. I was rummaging one of the boxes of a bookstall in Holborn, when the keeper of it came out and put two or three battered volumes among the rest. Instinctively I took one of them up and opened it. A great throb came into my heart and made me reel, for it was a prayer-book, and there on the title-page was *her* name—*hers*, and in *my* handwriting of years and years ago. The prayer-book that I had given her!

"Dear me, sir, you look faint-like," says the dealer, "let me fetch you a stool, or come in and sit down a bit."

"Can you—tell—me," I gasped, "where you bought this book? Where and when?"

"Where? Why, here. When? Why, five minutes ago, along with two or three more, of no particular value, of a poor little thing that said it was all her mother had to part with. Stop, sir, stop! why, there she is coming out of the grocer's shop this very minute. Run after the old gentleman, James; he'll do himself a mischief, or be run over, or something."

For I had dashed after the child like a madman, my hat off, the open book in my hand. James had outrun me though, and was now coming back with a child—a young girl, poorly clad—oh! so poorly clad; but yet like Mary—my Mary—on the day I wrote that name in the book still open in my hand.

"Mary!" I gasped.

"Yes, sir," said the child; "I must make haste home, or my mother will have no tea."

No, no, I will not dwell on the recollection of that poor room, with its evidences of want, its signs of suffering; nor of all that might have been said and was not. By the bedside of the woman whom I had loved and lost, and who was now passing from the world into the great reality of life, I had few words to speak. The only witness of the promise I made—except the Lord and His angels—was the silently weeping girl, *his* only remaining child. Almost the only words were—

"Mary!"

"Dick!"

And the child stood there clasping her mother's hand—*my* hand; to be in future my child and the child of the mother in heaven; and who shall tell but at the Resurrection——

Ah! I hear her foot upon the stair, her sweet voice singing as she comes—that sweet, sweet voice that one day, maybe, will sing me to sleep.

TWO FAIR DECEIVERS.

WHAT do young men talk about when they sit at the open windows smoking on summer evenings? Do you suppose it is of love? Indeed, I suspect it is of money; or, if not of money, then at least of something that either makes money or spends it.

Cleve Sullivan has been spending his four years in Europe, and he has just been telling his friend John Selden how he spent it. John has spent his in New York—he is inclined to think just as profitably. Both stories conclude in the same way.

“I have not a thousand dollars left, John.”

“Nor I, Cleve.”

“I thought your cousin died two years ago; surely you have not spent all the old gentleman’s money already?”

“I only got 20,000 dollars; I owed half of it.”

“Only 20,000 dollars! What did he do with it?”

“Gave it to his wife. He married a beauty about a year after you went away, died a few months afterwards, and left her his whole fortune. I had no claim on him. He educated me, gave me a profession and

20,000 dollars. That was very well ; he was only my mother's cousin."

"And the widow—where is she?"

"Living at his country seat. I have never seen her. She was one of the St. Maurs of Maryland."

"Good family, and all beauties. Why don't you marry the widow?"

"Why, I never thought of such a thing."

"You can't think of anything better. Write her a little note at once ; say that you and I will soon be in her neighbourhood, and that gratitude to your cousin, and all that kind of thing—then beg leave to call and pay respects, etc., etc."

John demurred a good deal to the plan ; but Cleve was masterful, and the note was written, Cleve himself putting it in the post-office.

That was on Monday night. On Wednesday morning the Widow Clare found it with a dozen others upon her breakfast-table. She was a dainty, high-bred little lady, with

"Eyes that drowse with dreamy splendour,
Cheeks with rose-leaf tintings tender,
Lips like fragrant posy,"

and withal a kind, hospitable temper, well inclined to be happy in the happiness of others.

But this letter could not be answered with the usual polite formula. She was quite aware that John Selden had regarded himself for many years as his cousin's heir, and that her marriage with the late Thomas Clare had seriously altered his prospects. Women easily

see through the best-laid plans of men, and this plan was transparent enough to the shrewd little widow. John would scarcely have liked the half-contemptuous shrug and smile which terminated her private thoughts on the matter.

"Clementine, if you could spare a moment from your fashion paper, I want to consult you, dear, about a visitor."

Clementine raised her blue eyes, dropped her paper, and said, "Who is it, Fan?"

"It is John Selden. If Mr. Clare had not married me he would have inherited the Clare estate. I think he is coming now in order to see if it is worth while asking for encumbered by his cousin's widow."

"What selfishness! Write and tell him that you are just leaving for the Suez Canal, or the Sandwich Islands, or any other inconvenient place."

"No; I have a better plan than that—Clementine, do stop reading a few minutes. I will take that pretty cottage at Ryebank for the summer, and Mr. Selden and his friend shall visit us there. No one knows us in the place, and I will take none of the servants with me."

"Well?"

"Then, Clementine, you are to be the widow Clare, and I your poor friend and companion."

"Good! very good! 'The Fair Deceivers'—an excellent comedy. How I shall snub you, Fan! And for once I shall have the pleasure of out-dressing you. But has not Mr. Selden seen you?"

"No ; I was married in Maryland, and went immediately to Europe. I came back a widow two years ago, but Mr. Selden has never remembered me until now. I wonder who this friend is that he proposes to bring along with him ? "

"Oh, men always think in pairs, Fan. They never decide on anything until their particular friend approves. I daresay they wrote the letter together. What is the gentleman's name ? "

The widow examined the note. "My friend Mr. Cleve Sullivan. Do you know him, Clementine ? "

"No ; I am quite sure that I never saw Mr. Cleve Sullivan. I don't fall in love with the name—do you ? But pray accept the offer for both gentlemen, Fan, and write this morning, dear." Then Clementine returned to the consideration of the lace in *coquilles* for her new evening dress.

The plan so hastily sketched was subsequently thoroughly discussed and carried out. The cottage at Ryebank was taken, and one evening at the end of June the two ladies took possession of it. The new widow Clare had engaged a maid in New York, and fell into her part with charming ease and a very pretty assumption of authority ; and the real widow, in her plain dress and pensive, quiet manners, realized effectively the idea of a cultivated but dependent companion. They had two days in which to rehearse their parts and get all the household machinery in order, and then the gentlemen arrived at Ryebank.

Fan and Clementine were quite ready for their first

call ; the latter in a rich and exquisite morning costume, the former in a simple dress of spotted lawn. Clementine went through the introductions with consummate ease of manner, and in half-an-hour they were a very pleasant party. John's "cousinship" afforded an excellent basis for informal companionship, and Clementine gave it full prominence. Indeed, in a few days John began to find the relationship tiresome ; it had been, "Cousin John, do this," and "Cousin John, come here," continually ; and one night, when he and Cleve sat down to smoke their final cigar, he was irritable enough to give his objections the form of speech.

"Cleve, to tell you the honest truth, I do not like Mrs. Clare."

"I think she is a very lovely woman, John."

"I say nothing against her beauty, Cleve ; I don't like her, and I have no mind to occupy the place that beautiful ill-used Miss Marat fills. The way Cousin Clare ignores or snubs a woman to whom she is every way inferior, makes me angry enough, I assure you."

"Don't fall in love with the wrong woman, John."

"Your advice is too late, Cleve ; I am in love. There is no use in us deceiving ourselves or each other. You seem to like the widow—why not marry her ? I am quite willing you should."

"Thank you, John ; I have already made some advances that way. They have been favourably received, I think."

"You are so handsome, a fellow has no chance

against you. But we shall hardly quarrel, if you do not interfere between lovely little Clement and myself."

"I could not afford to smile on her, John ; she is too poor. And what on earth are you going to do with a poor wife ? Nothing added to nothing will not make a decent living."

"I am going to ask her to be my wife, and if she does me the honour to say ' Yes,' I will make a decent living out of my profession."

From this time forth John devoted himself with some ostentation to his supposed cousin's companion. He was determined to let the widow perceive that he had made his choice, and that he could not be bought with her money. Mr. Selden and Miss Marat were always together, and the widow did not interfere between her companion and her cousin. Perhaps she was rather glad of their close friendship, for the handsome Cleve made a much more delightful attendant. Thus the party fell quite naturally into couples, and the two weeks that the gentlemen had at first fixed as the limit of their stay lengthened into two months.

It was noticeable that as the ladies became more confidential with their lovers they had less to say to each other ; and it began at last to be evident to the real widow that the play must end for the present, or the *dénouement* would come prematurely. Circumstances favoured her determination. One night Clementine, with a radiant face, came into her friend's room, and said, "Fan, Cleve has asked me to marry him."

"Now, Clement, you have told him all ; I know you have."

"Not a word, Fan. He still believes me the widow Clare."

"Did you accept him ?"

"Conditionally. I am to give him a final answer when we go to the city in October. You are going to New York this winter, are you not ?"

"Yes. Our little play progresses finely. John Selden asked me to be his wife to-night."

"I told you men think and act in pairs."

"John is a noble fellow. I pretended to think his cousin had ill-used him, and he defended him until I was ashamed of myself ; absolutely said, Clement, that you were a sufficient excuse for Mr. Clare's will. Then he blamed his own past idleness so much, and promised, if I would only try and endure 'the slings and arrows' of your outrageous temper, Clement, for two years longer, he would have made a home for me in which I could be happy. Yes, Clement, I should marry John Selden if we had not a five-dollar bill between us."

"I wish Cleve had been a little more explicit about his money affairs. However, there is time enough yet. When they leave to-morrow, what shall we do ?"

"We will remain here another month ; Levine will have the house ready for me by that time. I have written to him about refurnishing the parlours."

So next day the lovers parted, with many promises of constant letters and future happy days together.

The interval was long and dull enough ; but it passed ; and one morning both gentlemen received notes of invitation to a small dinner-party at the widow Clare's mansion in ——— Street. There was a good deal of dressing for this party. Cleve wished to make his entrance into his future home as became the prospective master of a million and a half of money, and John was desirous of not suffering in Clementine's eyes by any comparison with the other gentlemen who would probably be there.

Scarcely had they entered the drawing-room when the ladies appeared, the true widow Clare no longer in the unassuming toilet she had hitherto worn, but magnificent in white crepe lisse and satin, her arms and throat and pretty head flashing with sapphires and diamonds. Her companion had assumed now the rôle of simplicity, and Cleve was disappointed with the first glance at her plain white Chambéry gauze dress.

John had seen nothing but the bright face of the girl he loved and the love-light in her eyes. Before she could speak he had taken both her hands and whispered, "Dearest and best and loveliest Clement."

Her smile answered him first. Then she said, "Pardon me, Mr. Selden, but we have been in masquerade all summer, and now we must unmask before real life begins. My name is not Clementine Marat, but Fanny Clare. *Cousin John*, I hope you are not disappointed." Then she put her hand into John's, and they wandered off into the conservatory to finish their explanation.

Mr. Cleve Sullivan found himself at that moment in the most trying circumstance of his life. The real Clementine Marat stood looking down at a flower on the carpet, and evidently expecting him to resume the tender attitude he had been accustomed to bear towards her. He was a man of quick decision where his own interests were concerned, and it did not take him half a minute to review his position and determine what to do. This plain, blonde girl without fortune was not the girl he could marry; she had deceived him, too—he had a sudden and severe spasm of morality; his confidence was broken; he thought it was very poor sport to play with a man's most sacred feelings; he had been deeply disappointed and grieved, etc.

Clementine stood perfectly still, with her eyes fixed on the carpet and her cheeks gradually flushing as Cleve made his awkward accusations. She gave him no help and she made no defence, and it soon becomes embarrassing for a man to stand in the middle of a large drawing-room and talk to himself about any girl. Cleve felt it so.

"Have you done, sir?" at length she asked, lifting to his face a pair of blue eyes scintillating with scorn and anger; "I promised you my final answer to your suit when we met in New York. You have spared me that trouble. Good-evening, sir."

Clementine showed to no one her disappointment, and she probably soon recovered from it. Her life was full of many other pleasant plans and hopes, and she

could well afford to let a selfish lover pass out of it. She remained with her friend until after the marriage between her and John Selden had been consummated ; and then Cleve saw her name among the list of passengers sailing on one particular day for Europe. As John and his bride left on the same steamer, Cleve supposed, of course, she had gone in their company.

"Nice thing it would have been for Cleve Sullivan to marry John Selden's wife's maid, or something or other ! John always was a lucky fellow. Some fellows are always unlucky in love affairs ; I always am."

Half a year afterwards he reiterated this statement with a great deal of unnecessary emphasis. He was just buttoning his gloves preparatory to starting for his afternoon's drive, when an old acquaintance hailed him.

"Oh, it's that fool Belmar," he muttered ; "I shall have to offer him a ride. I thought he was in Paris. Hallo, Belmar, when did you get back ? Have a ride ?"

"No, thank you. I have promised my wife to ride with her this afternoon."

"Your wife ! When were you married ?"

"Last month, in Paris."

"And the happy lady was——"

"Why, I thought you knew ; every one is talking about my good fortune. Mrs. Belmar is old Paul Marat's only child."

"What ?"

"Miss Clementine Marat. She brings me nearly

3,000,000 dollars in money and real estate, and a heart beyond all price."

"How on earth did you meet her?"

"She was travelling with Mr. and Mrs. Selden—you know John Selden?—she has lived with Mrs. Selden ever since she left school; they were friends when they were girls together."

Cleve gathered up his reins, and, nodding to Mr. Frank Belmar, drove at a finable rate up the Avenue and through the Park. He could not trust himself to speak to any one, and when he did, the remark which he made to himself in strict confidence was not flattering. For once Mr. Cleve Sullivan told Mr. Cleve Sullivan that he had been badly punished, and that he well deserved it.

THE BRIDAL MORNING.

BY HANNAH MARY JONES.

ONE of the proudest hearts that ever beat in a woman's bosom was swelling beneath the bridal robes in which Laura Delancey had just attired herself, yet she rejected with scorn and impatience the tribute of admiration which her humble attendants were anxious to offer. There was but one by whom she wished her charms to be appreciated; one only whose homage she thought worthy of her, and he was absent. Yes, mortifying as it was to acknowledge it, Cecil Faulkner, the man to whom she had conceded that honour so eagerly sought, and so earnestly contested, the honour and happiness of being her partner for life, had already exceeded by nearly half-an-hour the appointed time.

The bridesmaids exchanged glances as Laura's cheek grew paler and paler; and Lady Delancey, as she stood at the window which commanded a full view of the square, muttered several expressions of anger and impatience.

"My dear mother, do not concern yourself," observed Laura, with a laugh which betrayed what it was intended to conceal; "Mr. Faulkner will, I daresay, be here in time; and if he is not, I shall not be the first

whom he has left to wear the willow, though you may be assured I shall not break *my* heart for his inconstancy."

"He would not—surely he dare not thus trifle with my daughter!" ejaculated her ladyship, still keeping her eye on the square, and seeming totally inattentive to all that passed within. "His desertion of Helen Clare was justifiable, though he certainly went too far; but now ——"

"I beg, madam, that no comparisons may be drawn," interrupted Laura haughtily. "The presumption and art of the girl you mention deserved the mortification met with."

"Helen Clare died last night," said a gentleman who had entered unperceived while she was speaking.

Laura started; and her mother, turning quickly round, discovered a countenance which, in spite of the rouge that covered her cheeks, was deathly pale.

"Your appearance, Mr. Stafford, is unlooked for: how am I to interpret it?" she demanded, making an effort to speak calmly.

"I come from Mr. Faulkner, madam," returned Stafford; "a violent, but I trust transient indisposition, has prevented his keeping his appointment here this morning; but I am commissioned, if Miss Delancey will honour me so far, to attend her to church, where he is by this time awaiting her arrival."

"This is strange, very strange!" exclaimed Laura. Lady Delancey interfered. "There is no time to discuss

the subject now, Laura. Mr. Faulkner will undoubtedly explain."

She rang violently for the carriages ; and in another minute the bride and her fair attendants were seated in one, while Mr. Stafford, with the lady-mother, followed in another. The bridegroom was sitting in a chair in the vestry-room when the bridal train entered. His face was resting on his hand, and one of the persons who stood near him twice announced that the ladies were come before he looked up ; and then what a picture of woe, of horror, and remorse did that face present !

"So soon," he observed, starting as if just awakened from some horrible dream. "Well—what am I to do ? what do they expect of me ?"

Mr. Stafford advanced to him. "Cecil, recollect yourself ; add not to the remorse you already feel by destroying the peace and wounding the reputation of——"

"Well, well ; I know all ; I am willing to do all that they require ;" and he advanced towards the ladies who were coming up the aisle. His eye rested not an instant on the bride, whose fine features were flushed with a thousand contending passions, and whose piercing dark eyes seemed to flash fire. It was the crafty, designing mother whom his anxious gaze sought, and whom he hastily approached.

"You have triumphed——" he began ; but Mr. Stafford interposed, and Cecil, with a wild and distracted look, placed himself by the side of Laura.

The clergyman commenced reading the sacred ritual,

and proceeded without interruption until Laura was called on to reply to the interrogation, "Wilt thou take this man for thy wedded husband?"

"No!" she responded, in a firm and audible tone.

Cecil fixed on her a look of mingled surprise and exultation, while her mother, violently seizing her arm, exclaimed, "Mad, rash fool! what are you doing?"

"I am not mad now, madam," she replied with calmness. "It is since I have entered this place that I have recovered my senses."

"You are an angel," exclaimed Cecil, sinking on one knee, and attempting to take her hand, which, however, she withheld.

"No, sir, I disclaim all right to your adoration!" she replied. "It is for my own sake, not yours, that I reject the honour of your alliance. I can never consent to accept a hand without a heart. Yours is——"

"Buried in the grave of Helen Clare," he wildly interrupted her; "and for this—for this she was murdered—yes, murdered. Your arts and my credulity," he continued, fixing his fierce and swollen eyes on Lady Delancey, "have murdered her!"

"This is too much," her ladyship exclaimed, every feature being distorted with passion. "Laura, I insist on your instantly leaving this place, unless you take pleasure in seeing me insulted."

The clergyman had closed his book, and advancing to Laura, in whose cheek the crimson hue of anger and resentment had now faded into ashy paleness, he entreated her to let him conduct her from a scene

which to prolong would only be to increase the pain felt by all parties.

"I feel it necessary to apologise to you, sir, for apparent disrespect," observed Laura, "but I assure you it was not premeditated. I meant, even when I approached the altar, to have fulfilled the purpose for which I came hither. Pardon me, I see you about to remonstrate; but my resolution is the result of conviction, not of rash impulse."

The clergyman bowed. He saw, indeed, it was in vain to remonstrate with one so decided and self-willed; and she re-entered her carriage with that firmness and self-possession which, during this trying scene, never for a moment deserted her.

Not so Cecil Faulkner. Until the moment that the folding-doors shut Laura from his view he seemed unconscious of what was passing; but when recollection returned, shame and regret for the past, with the anticipation of a wearisome blank for the rest of his existence, operated, together with the severe bodily indisposition which the events of a few preceding hours had produced, to render him almost unequal to the task of walking to his carriage.

It was not for some time after this that I learnt all the circumstances connected with this extraordinary scene. They were extremely simple; but the youth, the beauty, the talents, and I may say the rank of some of the parties, made them interesting to many beside myself, who to all these motives added that of personal friendship for more than one of the individuals concerned.

Helen Clare was the daughter of an artist, who, having the honour of a distant relationship to Lady Delancey, had been indebted to her patronage for the fame and emoluments which his talents, eminent as they really were, would probably not otherwise have procured him. He died young, having first followed to the grave a beloved wife, and leaving to inherit his name and his talents an only daughter. Helen was three years younger than Laura Delancey; and the latter, naturally benevolent and kind-hearted, though as petulant, froward, and self-willed as a spoiled child of fortune could be, pleaded the cause of the beautiful orphan so effectually, that Helen was taken into her ladyship's house. Too proud and too vain to have the slightest idea that Helen could enter into any competition with her, Laura Delancey treated her with kindness until the arrival of Cecil Faulkner from the Continent opened her eyes to the mortifying conviction that the humble Helen was preferred to her.

The immense fortune of which Faulkner was possessed rendered it important to Lady Delancey to secure him for her daughter. She therefore contrived to insinuate suspicions into Faulkner's mind, which effectually changed his intentions towards Helen. Indignant at the slight, she hastened to communicate it to Lady Delancey, and was persuaded by her to retire for a short time into the country, to the house of a friend of her ladyship, observing, that in all probability her absence would bring Mr. Faulkner to his proper senses. In an evil hour Helen left London under the protection of

Lady Delancey's ready friend, Mr. Maudsley, and her ladyship took care that Faulkner should see her depart with the man whom he had been led to believe was her lover.

It would be tedious to relate the arts by which he was induced to offer his hand to Laura ; but the result has been stated. The mask of respect which Maudsley wore towards Helen was thrown aside when she repulsed his addresses. He hesitated not to tell her that her reputation was sacrificed by her accepting his protection. She wrote to Lady Delancey, but her letters were returned unanswered. Terrified and harassed on every side, and without a single friend to whom she could look for counsel or assistance, the unfortunate Helen fell into a rapid decline. It was then that Maudsley felt the iniquity of his conduct ; and in a moment of contrition he acknowledged to the dying girl the long train of arts and deceptions which had been concerted between him and Lady Delancey. Helen had but one wish in the world : it was a weakness, she confessed, but she should die in peace, she said, could she once more see Cecil Faulkner, and convince him that she had not deserved his conduct. She was conveyed by easy stages to London, and the very night preceding the day appointed for his nuptials, her former lover was conducted to the side of her death-bed. Love and truth lent irresistible eloquence to all Helen uttered. Faulkner was agonised by her narrative ; and when he beheld her dying before him, he accused himself and Lady Delancey of having murdered her, and declared

that no power on earth should compel him to unite himself to Laura.

It was not many months after this event that the public papers announced the marriage of Laura Delancey to a peer, whose age nearly trebled her own ; and about the same time Cecil Faulkner, for the first time since the death of Helen Clare, was enabled to mix in society. He had been brought to the verge of the grave by a fever, and a more lamentable change cannot be conceived than that which had taken place in the two persons who had so lately been the envy and admiration of all who knew them. For a short season Laura shone the brightest and gayest in the circle of fashion ; but the eye of friendship could discover what the splendour of dress, and the mysterious arts of the toilette, and the assumed vivacity of the sufferer, hid from the world, that she was fast fading from a scene which had become hateful to her. A nervous fever soon released her ; and, by a striking coincidence, close by the splendid marble which perpetuates her name and high-sounding titles, is placed the plain and simple tablet which records the fate of Helen Clare.

PADDYEEN CARROCH :

A HALLOW-EVE NARRATIVE.

SURE then I never told you a story of a Hallow-eve, that's true as you are there.

It happened close by Ard carrick, where I lived before I married poor Terence. There was a farmer there who was very well in the world; he was the richest farmer within thirty miles of Ard carrick, and he had just one daughter to leave it to, and she was the handsomest girl round about that country, but she was very proud and obstinate, and thought nobody fit for her, or good enough. And all the farmers' sons, and the agent's son, let alone all the farmers, wanted to marry her; and she refused them every one, and said there was no man in that country fit to be her husband.

Now in her father's house there was a lad of sixteen, and he was called Paddyveen Carroch, because his name was Patrick. And his hair was bright red, and he used to put up the cows and look after the pigs, and a very good lad he was though a servant, but little of his age; and Ellen Macarthy hated him because his hair was red.

The land Macarthy was on was sold to an English gentleman, and his son used to be shooting upon it : he was a very handsome young man. One day he was loading his gun in a field near Macarthy's house, and Ellen passed by to milk the cows, with a pail in her hand. She did not see him and the gamekeeper till she had passed the stile. "And who's that?" says he; "I did not think there was a girl in all Ireland, let alone Kerry, as handsome as that one." "You may well say that, sir," says the gamekeeper, "for that's Ellen Macarthy, and most people say the likes of her never stood on the mould."

Well, from that day the young gentleman made some reason every day for calling in at her father's: he wanted a drink of milk, or to know where the mushrooms grew, or to choose an apple in their orchard, and would ask Ellen to help him find a good one; and he would come in with his hands stuck full of thorns, and beg her to take them out, for his father's housekeeper was old and blind and could not find them; in short, he was more at her father's farm than in his father's hall. And her aunt used to say, "Ellen, I am afraid you had best be taking care of yourself—sure his honour will never marry you." But Ellen laughed and said, "Do not fear for me: I will be a great lady, or I'll be nothing but Ellen Macarthy. Why should he not marry me? great men have married poor girls before now." And her father used to say, "Why, she is *now* more like a lady or a queen itself than a farmer's daughter."

His honour came every day; still he did not talk of

marrying, but he told Ellen she was the handsomest woman in the wide world, and he could not live without her. And as she knew the family were going away for the winter, she thought he would surely ask her to marry, that they might not be parted; but he only asked her to love him—which was easy talking. The winter was coming fast, the leaves were falling, and so was the rain; and the wind moaned and whistled as it does now, and Ellen grew sad and anxious, and wondered how a young man can leave a girl he cannot live without.

At last, the harvest being all in, the labourers were paid and sent away. On Allhallow's-eve there was nobody left in the house but old Norah the servant, who was spinning by a fine clear turf fire in the kitchen. Macarthy sat opposite to her, in a high-backed chair on the other side; Paddyeen Carroch was mending a fishing-net by the dresser, and Ellen was nursing a sick puppy his honour had given her.

"A fire's a comfort such a sharp night as this," says Macarthy. "Ah, it's winter fairly set in," said Norah—Ellen sighed at the word winter. "And it will be a hard winter, too," says Norah, "when frost sets in on Allhallow's-eve. But now we think of that, Ellen, sure, when I was your age, it would not be nursing a puppy I was, but burning nuts to see whether my love was true, or baking a soot cake to dream on, or sowing hemp, or throwing a ball of worsted to see who held, or——"

"What is that?" said Ellen, "I never heard of that."

"Why, go to an upper window, throw out a ball of worsted, and ask who holds; and the man you are to marry, or the devil in his likeness, will answer his name."

"Ah!" said Ellen, "no devil can take his likeness; I'll try that." "And I'll go to bed," said Macarthy.

Ellen took a ball of worsted and ran to the farmyard, where there was a loft over the barn; she ran up the stone steps outside the barn, and threw the ball of worsted out of the loft window, holding the end tight in her hand. When she thought the ball had reached the ground, "Who holds ye?" and a voice answered, "Paddyen Carroch." Now Ellen had reckoned to hear his honour's voice, and frightened and vexed enough she was when she called again, "Who holds ye?" and again the voice answered "Paddyen Carroch." And a third time she had the same answer in the same voice, which was the voice of Paddyen Carroch.

She grew very angry, and ran into the kitchen, where she found him standing by the dresser mending the fishing-net, as she left him. "Isn't it very bold of you, Paddyen," says she, "to come and catch my ball of worsted, and repeat your name to me, who am your master's daughter?"

"Faith, Miss Ellen," says he, "it's myself that has never stirred from this place since you were in it, as old Norah might witness, if she was not gone to bed."

"How dare you tell me such a lie?" says Ellen; "it's not five minutes since your ugly voice answered me from below the loft window."

"Troth, Miss Ellen, it must have been the devil in my likeness."

This vexed her more than all the rest, and catching up a pewter plate, she threw it at his head with all her might. It knocked the poor lad down, and cut his head open, and covered him with blood from head to foot. He said nothing, but went to the pump and washed it off. Ellen felt ashamed of having been so passionate, and sorry to have hurt the poor lad; but she thought it was very impudent of him to hold the ball of worsted.

"So, Ellen," said Macarthy, the next day, "you have broken my servant's head and sent him away!"

"He made me very angry, father, with his impudence," said Ellen; "but I have not sent him away."

"Yes, but you have though. He came to me this morning by daylight, and told me where he had left everything that was in his charge, and said he could stay no longer, for he had gotten your ill-will. He left you the tame blackbird he reared, and hoped you would forgive him, for he had done nothing to offend you."

Ellen had no time to think of Paddyen, because the winter came, and his honour went; and he made her many offers, but not what she expected; and he told her that he should see nothing worth loving till he saw her again—but he went.

The winter was very heavy with Ellen Macarthy; but it passed, and the family did not return to the hall in spring. She made many errands to go to the housekeeper, but could hear nothing of the family,

but that the house was not getting ready for them. And she had more offers among the neighbours, but she continued to refuse them, and wait for his honour; and she had time enough to think of him, for her father was laid up often and often with the rheumatism.

One day she was sitting by him, and she heard the report of a gun. She ran out to see who it was, and found his honour and a young lady on horseback at the door. "Ah, Ellen, my dear, how do you do?" says he. "I promised my wife I would show her the best and the prettiest girl on my estate to-day; and I am glad to see you looking so well,—and how is your father? See what fine eyes can be found among our bogs," says he to his wife, who smiled and said,—

"Indeed, Ellen, I have often heard of you."

Ellen could only blush and curtsy, and keep the tears from her eyes till they were out of sight. She was ashamed to complain, and to have expected such great luck. But she could not settle down afterwards to marry one of the neighbours, after saying there was no man fit to be her husband.

In a few years more Macarthy died, and she managed the farm alone; and the red-cheeked apples she used to gather for his honour she gave to his children, when the nurses walked that way with them.

At last the hall was sold to a gentleman who had made his fortune beyond seas; a dark, sun-burnt gentleman he was, but very civil and well-spoken, and a kind landlord. But it was all one to Ellen Macarthy; she was cured of expecting to please great men, and

cared not for pleasing low men, but was content to die an old maid, as her chance seemed. Her landlord used to give his opinion about the farm, and seemed to understand it. After a while he told Ellen he loved her, and she liked him, and agreed to be his wife ; so the hall became hers at last, and very happy she was in it.

One day her husband was thrown from his horse when he was hunting, and received a cut on the temple, but not a very bad one ; and as his wife was bathing it she said, "After all, this will soon be cured, and it won't be the worst hurt you ever had, my dear, for close to it I see you have had a horrible gash where this great scar is—how did you get that, Mr. Connor ? Was it fighting beyond seas ?"

"No, my dear, says he ; "that blow was given me by a woman."

"A woman !—holy martyrs ! these wild foreign women are as fierce as men. A *black* woman, Mr. Connor ?"

"No, my dear ; the fairest girl in all Ireland, let alone Kerry : that blow was given by Ellen Macarthy."

Ellen shrieked, for though he was grown tall, and his hair was grown dark, and he was tanned by the sun, and had lost the brogue by living in foreign lands, she knew she was the wife of Paddy Carroch !

